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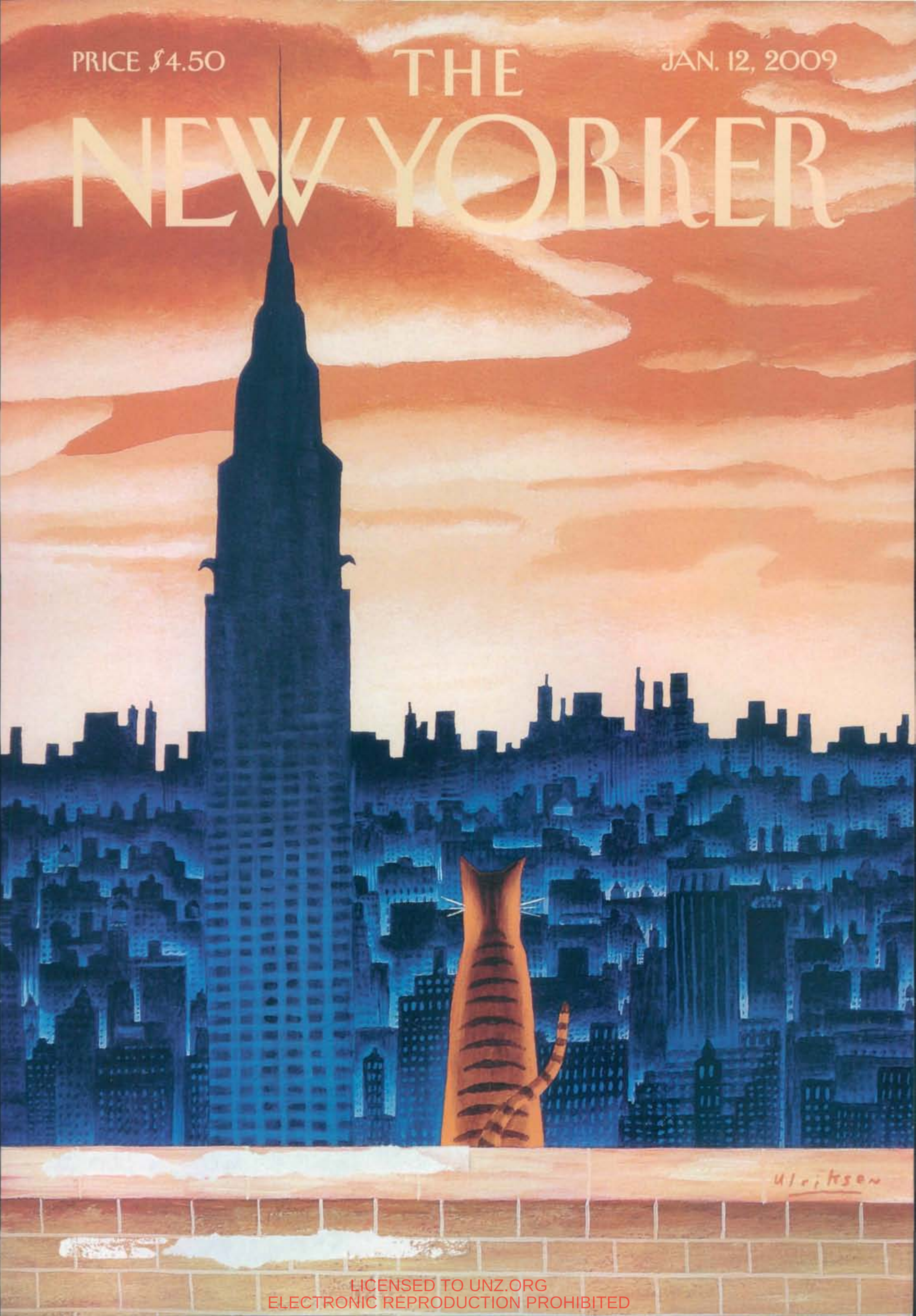

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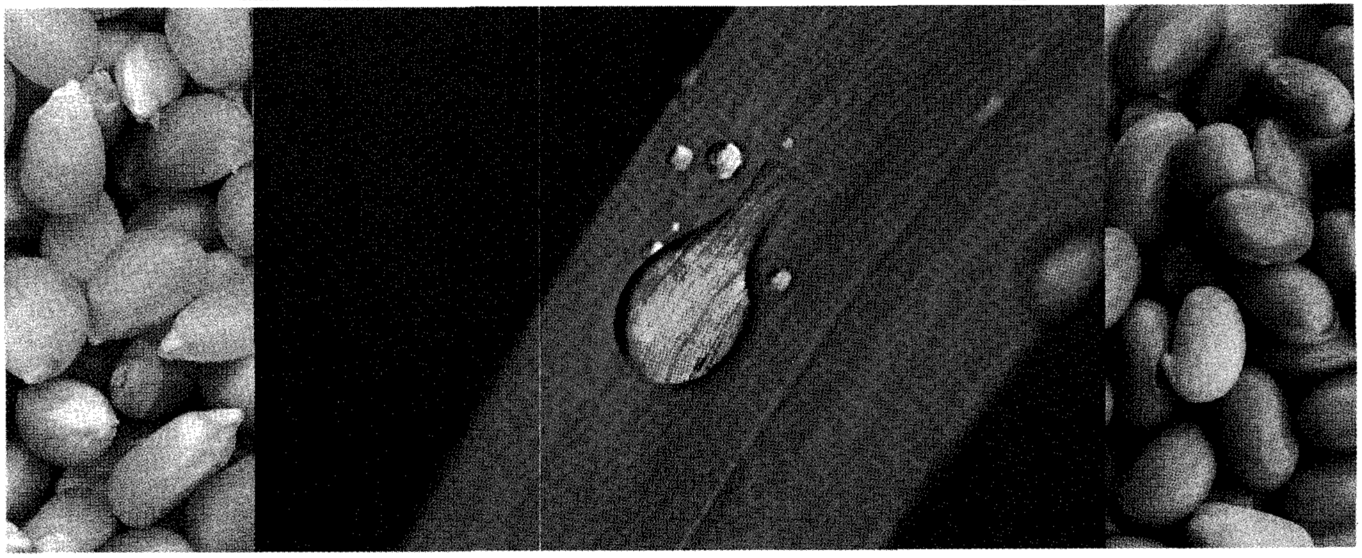

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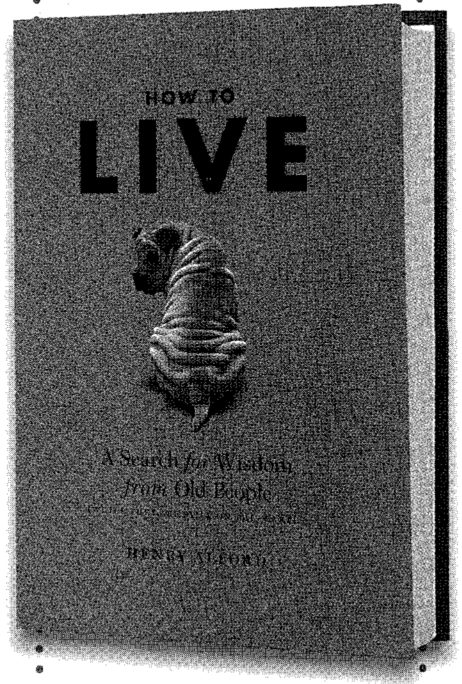

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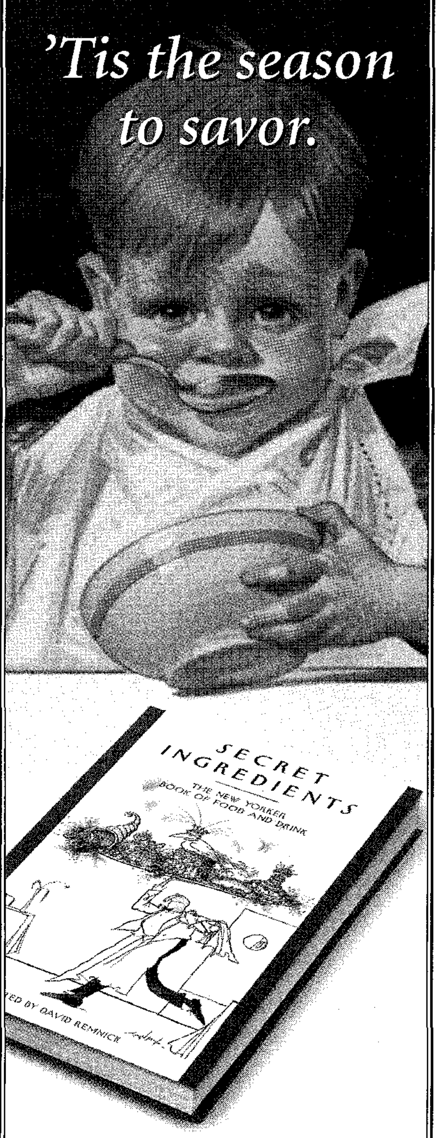

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey Toobin ("Barney's Great Adventure," p. 36) won the 2008 J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize for "The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court," which is now available in paperback.

Ben McGrath (The Talk of the Town, p. 18) is a staff writer.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 21) writes about economics, business, and finance in his biweekly column. His book "The Wisdom of Crowds" is available in paperback.

Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 29) published his first children's book, "Marveltown," in September.

Martin Schoeller (Photograph, p. 36) is included in a show of portrait photography currently at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Jill Lepore ("The Speech," p. 48), a professor of history at Harvard and the chair of the History and Literature Program, recently published a novel, "Blindspot," written with Jane Kamensky.

Michael Robbins (Poem, p. 57) teaches poetry at Columbia College, in Chicago. His reviews and poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Chicago Review*, and *Columbia Poetry Review*.

Peter Hessler ("Strange Stones," p. 30), the author of "Oracle Bones," is working on "Country Driving," a book about the impact of the automobile in China.

Elizabeth Kolbert ("Greening the Ghetto," p. 22) writes regularly about the environment. She is the co-editor, with Francis Spufford, of "The Ends of the Earth: An Anthology of the Finest Writing on the Arctic and the Antarctic."

Louise Glück (Poem, p. 44) was the U.S. Poet Laureate for 2003-04. Her new collection, "A Village Life," comes out in September.

Joyce Carol Oates (Fiction, p. 54) is the author of, most recently, the novel "My Sister, My Love: The Intimate Story of Skyler Rampike" and "Wild Nights! Stories About the Last Days of Poe, Dickinson, Twain, James, and Hemingway."

Adam Kirsch (A Critic at Large, p. 62) is a senior editor at *The New Republic*. His most recent books are "Invasions: New Poems" and "Benjamin Disraeli."

Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 70) is the magazine's pop-music critic.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 72) has a new book, "Snark," which will be published this month.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
The New Yorker Out Loud: The staff photographers *Martin Schoeller* and *Steve Pyke* on the art and business of portraiture. / Video: *Sasha Frere-Jones* interviews Justin Vernon, of Bon Iver. / Ask the Author: *Jeffrey Toobin* takes readers' questions. / Blogs: *Hendrik Hertzberg* nominates Chris Matthews for the Senate, the Book Bench plows through "2666," and posts by *Steve Coll*, *George Packer*, and *James Surowiecki*. / From the archive: *Hendrik Hertzberg* and *Susan Lardner* on inaugurals, plus every issue since 1925. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events.

THE MAIL

ANCIENT RECIPES

I was interested in the archeological work that, Burkhard Bilger reports, underlies Dogfish Head brewery's Midas Touch beer ("A Better Brew," November 24th). I encourage Sam Calagione, Dogfish Head's owner, to explore another ancient recipe, recorded in the Odyssey: "[Circe] mixed for them cheese and barley and yellow-green honey in Pramnian wine." (The archeological chemist Patrick McGovern and others have suggested that the barley meal may have been fermented.) Calagione must not, however, leave out the crucial ingredient: moly, which the god Hermes supplied to Odysseus. Otherwise, this brew apparently has the power to turn men into pigs.

David Elmer
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Cambridge, Mass.

KLEIN AND THE POLITICAL

I believe that electoral politics is the main way political progress is made, and that movement politics, as embodied by Naomi Klein, usually achieves the opposite of its goals ("Outside Agitator," by Larissa MacFarquhar, December 8th). Max Weber, in his famous lecture "Politics as a Vocation," distinguishes two ethics that are prevalent in politics: the ethics of ultimate ends, focussed on purity of intention, and the ethics of responsibility, focussed on consequences. Weber concludes that only the latter has any place in politics, and anyone who does not understand this is "a political infant." This would seem to apply to Klein, who "doesn't have much use for political parties," who "disdains the political," and who believes that real change comes only from social movements. It is not surprising that Klein holds that Obama's policies reflect "the triumph of the right-wing political paradigm since Reagan."

Owen C. Thomas
Berkeley, Calif.

MacFarquhar, in referring to the article "Reenacting '68," creates a bit of confusion: although *The Platypus Review* did publish the piece, Liam Warfield, its author, is not a member of our organization, and *Platypus* did not participate in the reënactment. MacFarquhar's excellent Profile of Klein illustrates many aspects of the complex and problematic legacy of the left, regarding which *Platypus* seeks to cultivate a critical understanding. As MacFarquhar suggests, Klein's work points up the kinds of obstacles faced in reconstituting a left for the future, following a history of failures.

Laurie Rojas
Editor, The Platypus Review
Chicago, Ill.

MacFarquhar writes that Klein "disdains the political" for two interrelated reasons: Klein's mistrust of political parties and governments and her economic materialism. However, these add up to political disdain only if you embrace a narrow understanding of the political, centered on the offices and mechanisms of the state. The two examples MacFarquhar provides of political action that Klein finds inspiring—the self-organized neighborhood committees of Buenos Aires and the 2001 Quebec City protests against the Summit of the Americas—suggest that Klein embraces a broader understanding of the political. In both examples, she celebrates the capacity of ordinary people to respond collectively to challenges they commonly face. The far left hardly has a monopoly on this classical understanding of the political; it was, for example, central to Tocqueville's admiration of democracy in America. That such collective action registers as a radical "alternative reality" to Klein merely attests to the power of the individualizing market forces that she has so eloquently opposed.

Jason Frank
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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11	12	13	7	8	9	10

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
UNDER THE BOARDS

The Public Theatre presents the fifth annual "Under the Radar" festival, a showcase of the latest offerings from up-and-coming troupes from around the world. This year's roster includes works from Korea's Sadari Movement Laboratory ("Woyzeck"), the National Theatre of Scotland and the TEAM ("Architecting"), Gare St. Lazare Players Ireland ("First Love"), and the Netherlands' Kassys ("LIGA, 50% Reward & 50% Punishment"). (See page 6.)

NIGHT LIFE
TAKE THE LOCAL

The young Brazilian singer Márcio Local layers his soulful croon over samba beats and brings a burst of sunshine wherever he performs. He's making his United States début with shows at Zebulon, in Brooklyn, and Nublu and Webster Hall, in Manhattan. (See page 7.)

ART
ON THE MAKE

"The Space of the Work and the Place of the Object," at SculptureCenter, considers the relationship between a work of art and the process by which it was made. The group show features paintings by Blake Rayne, sculptures by Walead Beshty and Simon Starling, and a site-specific installation by Karin Schneider, among other pieces. (See page 9.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
STRANGE INTERLUDE

Two brilliant Italians—Galileo Galilei and Primo Levi—meet in "Falling Bodies," a chamber-music piece with actors by the composer Bruce Saylor and the writer Jonathan Levi, offered at the Rubin Museum of Art. (See page 12.)

MOVIES
STEP IN TIME

This year's "Dance on Camera" series, at Walter Reade, includes Maurice Tourneur's 1918 feature "The Blue Bird," with its original color tints, and a day of programs devoted to Busby Berkeley, including the vertiginous 1943 classic "The Gang's All Here," a talk by the critic J. Hoberman, and a lecture by the choreographer and filmmaker Kriota Willberg on Berkeley's enduring influence. (See page 15.)

"Wickets," at 3LD. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

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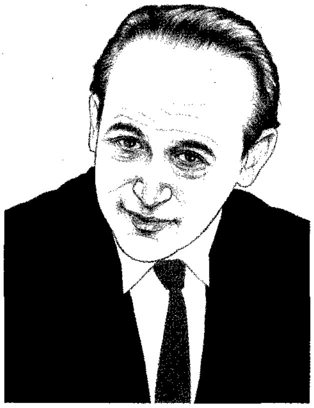
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
WORD POWER

The poet Paul Antschel—more commonly known as Paul Celan—was born in 1920, into a German-speaking Jewish family with roots in Romania. Along with a number of other Jews, he and his parents were rounded up in the early forties. His parents died in the camps, but their language-loving son survived. The composer Dan Kaufman has set some of Celan's most haunting lyrics to fine, elegiac music on "Force of Light," an album distributed by the prolific jazz artist John Zorn. On Jan. 7, at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, Kaufman and his band, Barbez, will play the album, while the Scottish performance artist Fiona Templeton reads selections from Celan's work, against a backdrop of video imagery by John Jesurun. When he won the Bremen Prize, in 1958, twelve years before his death, Celan reflected on his experiences as a Holocaust victim, saying, "Only one thing remained reachable, close and secure amid all losses: language. Yes, language. In spite of everything, it remained secure against loss."

—*Hilton Als*



GRAFILU

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

THE AMERICAN PLAN
Manhattan Theatre Club presents Richard Greenberg's play, set in the nineteen-sixties, about a young woman who lives across the lake from a Catskills resort and falls in love. Mercedes Ruehl and Lily Rabe star; David Grindley ("Journey's End") directs. In previews. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

BECKY SHAW
Peter DuBois directs Gina Gionfriddo's comedy, about a newlywed couple who fix up two friends. In previews. Opens Jan. 8. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THE BLUE BIRD
Witness Relocation performs a play by Mikuni Yanaihara, translated by Aya Ogawa and Kameron Steele, about a group of scientists in search of an endangered species. Opens Jan. 7. (CSV, 107 Suffolk St. 212-868-4444.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
The Bridge Project presents a new translation by Tom Stoppard of Chekhov's play. Sam Mendes directs; Simon Russell Beale, Sinéad Cusack, Rebecca Hall, Richard Easton, Josh Hamilton, and Ethan Hawke star. In previews. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

THE CONNECTION
Judith Malina directs Jack Gelber's play from 1959, in which junkies and jazz musicians are filmed as they wait to buy drugs. In previews. Opens Jan. 8. (Living Theatre, 19 Clinton St. 212-352-3101.)

COIL
P.S. 122 hosts its annual festival devoted to downtown theatre. Participants include Reid Farrington, Palissimo, and LeeSaar the Company. Jan. 6-13. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

CRANKED
The New Victory presents a play by Michael P. Northey, about a rapper's addiction to crystal meth. Opens Jan. 9. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

EIGHT
Ella Hickson wrote and directs this play, which premièred at Edinburgh Fringe, examining the psyche of England's twenty-something generation. Part of the "Coil" festival, at P.S. 122. In previews. Opens Jan. 11. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

HEDDA GABLER
Mary-Louise Parker, Michael Cerveris, Paul Sparks, Peter Stormare, Lois Markle, and Ana Reeder star in a new adaptation by Christopher Shinn of the Ibsen drama, about a woman trapped in an unhappy marriage. Ian Rickson directs the Roundabout Theatre Company production. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE SHIPMENT
Young Jean Lee wrote and directs this play, about what it means to be black in America. Preview on Jan. 8. Opens Jan. 9. (Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

SOUL OF SHAOLIN
A new Chinese martial-arts show, about an orphan who grows up with the monks of the Shaolin temple and becomes a master in their style of kung fu. Previews begin Jan. 13. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

UNDER THE RADAR
The Public presents its annual festival of the latest cutting-edge theatre from around the world. Opens Jan. 7. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

WICKETS
Clove Galilee and Jenny Rogers direct this adaptation of Maria Irene Fornes's "Fefu and Her Friends," set on an airplane, about the inner lives of eight flight attendants. In previews. Opens Jan. 8. (3LD Art & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL
Fans of Lee Hall and Stephen Daldry's 2000 movie, set in northern England in the mid-nineteen-eighties, about a boy who quits boxing to take up ballet, may notice that Daldry's musical adaptation, with songs by Elton John, lacks a few of the film's charms—nuanced characters, the memorable final scene, T. Rex. But it does have a satisfying combination of hard-scrabble wit and populist brio that's especially exciting to see on Broadway. Three boys alternate in the title role; in a recent performance, Kiril Kulish danced thrillingly as Billy, and David Bologna was terrific as his cross-dressing friend, Michael. The show ably demonstrates dance's power to free the soul and inspire the crowd; in one of the best numbers, bobbies, striking miners, little girls in tutus, Billy, and his teacher dance together, belting out the words "solidarity forever." (Imperial, 240 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN
The Atlantic Theatre Company partners with Galway's Druid Theatre to import this invigorating revival, directed by Garry Hynes, of Martin McDonagh's bleak comedy about a disfigured young man with Hollywood dreams. In 1934, the filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty set up shop on an island off the coast of Ireland to make what would eventually become "Man from Aran," a pseudo-documentary about the local peasants. McDonagh sets his own pseudo-anthropological eye on the next island over, among a gossip-addled community of drunks, bullies, and tattletales, who are thrown into a mild frenzy over the disappearance of Cripple Billy, the town orphan and emotional punching bag (beautifully acted by Aaron Monaghan), who sees Flaherty's film as his one chance at escape and decides to take it. The ensemble deftly navigates McDonagh's rough terrain of alternating darkness and humor with aplomb, painting a sharp portrait of a world where cruelty is inseparable from love. (336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200.)

GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Revived and revamped, Martha Clarke's 1984 dance-theatre fantasia on the theme of Hieronymus Bosch's sixteenth-century triptych more than retains its power to beguile and startle. Taking us through Eden, the seven deadly sins, and the tortures of Hell in a little more than an hour, Clarke keeps her striking images flowing—and, with the help of harnesses and pulleys, flying. Like Bosch's, Clarke's vision of doom is full of life. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100.)

HOME
The Signature's season devoted to the Negro Ensemble Company continues with Samm-Art Williams's swift-footed tale of dreams deferred, which gave the troupe a hit when it played on Broadway, in 1980. Kevin T. Carroll plays Cephus Miles, who comes of age in the nineteen-fifties in the tobacco fields of North Carolina and prays to a God who he's convinced has fled to Miami. After Cephus serves a term in prison for dodging the draft, he moves to the disillusioning big city, until, finally, fate brings him back to the "soft beautiful black sod" of home. Two superb actresses (Tracey Bonner and January LaVoy) play a multitude of other characters, and Ron OJ Parson's production sails on the life-worn humor of Williams's script. (Signature Theatre Company, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. Through Jan. 11.)

A LIGHT LUNCH
In A. R. Gurney's new comedy, an attractive lawyer from L.A. (Beth Hoyt) flies to New York on behalf of an anonymous client to buy A. R. Gurney's new, unfinished play about George W. Bush. At lunch with Gurney's agent (Tom Lipinski), though, the lawyer queers the deal by revealing that her client is a famous Republican looking to bury the play rather than produce it. With the help of an opinionated waitress (Havilah Brewster) and her scholarly boyfriend (John Russo), the agent attempts to rewrite the damning ending in order to redeem Bush. It's clear, in this trifle of a play, that Gurney has a few suggestions for Bush about how he might handle his exit from office. While the actors seem to be enjoying themselves pummelling Bush, the audience is left

to eavesdrop on yet another uninspiring conversation about politics. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

PAL JOEY
At Studio 54, this Rodgers and Hart musical from 1940, well directed by Joe Mantello, has a shrewd, streamlined new book by Richard Greenberg, in an exciting production for the Roundabout Theatre Company. Joey (Matthew Risch) picks up the jejune Linda (Jenny Fellner) at a diner, but, except for a bit of quick strategic thinking that reels in her lonely heart, we don't see any excess of imagination; we just see lies. For the price of his company, the rich Mrs. Vera Simpson (Stockard Channing) bankrolls Joey's dream: his own night club. Channing makes Simpson's hauteur and her hunger sensational, while Martha Plimpton, as Gladys Bumps, has a big, surprising brassy voice and an attitude to match. Risch, who started out as the understudy, is good-looking, strong-voiced, and hardworking, and he delivers the appropriate cocky brio, but he doesn't have the twinkle that Joey must have to explain why such a ruthless meathead is catnip to women. Although parts of this soufflé are delicious, it never completely rises. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/5/09.) (254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

SHREK THE MUSICAL
At two and a half hours, this musical is thirty minutes and four songs too long. It's really a pantomime, a vulgar spectacle in which the makers—the director, Jason Moore; the designer, Tim Hatley; the composer, Jeanine Tesori; and the lyricist and book writer, David Lindsay-Abaire—have not risen to the challenge of fantasy, to make something genuinely imaginative, but have settled instead for the safely generic. Brian d'Arcy James, Sutton Foster, and Christopher Sieber give it their all, but mediocrity defeats even their charisma. Tap-dancing mice and an exploding bird are the high points of a listless evening. If you like burping and farting onstage, this is your show; otherwise, get the DVD and suffer banality in the comfort of your own home. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

ALL MY SONS: Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Through Jan. 11. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **EQUUS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **GYPSY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Through Jan. 11. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **THE LITTLE MERMAID:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Through Jan. 11. **SLEEPWALK WITH ME:** Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 212-239-6200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **SPEED-THE-PLOW:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **STREAMERS:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. Through Jan. 11. **THE 39 STEPS:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Jan. 7: The slick rockabilly revivalist and New Wave veteran **Robert Gordon** joins forces with his old sparring partner, the storied British guitarist **Chris Spedding** (a string-bender who has played with everyone from the Wombles to the Sex Pistols), to celebrate the birth of Elvis Presley.

BLENDER THEATRE AT GRAMERCY
127 E. 23rd St. (800-745-3000)—Jan. 11: The veteran soul singer **Bettye LaVette,** who can suggest a heartbroken wail through a whisper and make a slow ballad pulse like scorching gospel rock. With the blues guitarist **John Hammond.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Jan. 9-10: **Camper Van Beethoven,** perhaps the preëminent college rock band of the mid-eighties, blazed a trail with experimental folk-tinged rock that came topped with a slightly smarmy wit.

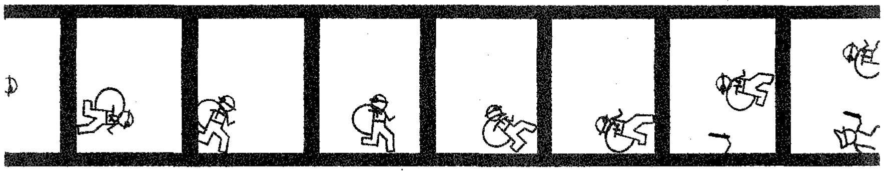
MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Jan. 10: **A Hawk and a Hacksaw** are a riveting Gypsy-tinged duet. The accordionist, drummer, and singer Jeremy Barnes (formerly of Neutral Milk Hotel) and the violinist Heather Trost play complicated yet lyrical songs that emphasize extremely fast tempos and intricate accordion lines. With the slower-paced folk-rock trio **Great Lakes Swimmers,** who hail from Toronto. The group has a gentle, vulnerable sound that is most notable in the high-pitched, aching voice of the front man Tony Dekker, who recalls another Ontarian, Neil Young.

MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE: A LIVING MEMORIAL TO THE HOLOCAUST
36 Battery Pl. (646-437-4202)—Jan. 7: Dan Kaufman and his band, **Barbez,** perform songs from their album "Force of Light."

92Y TRIBECA
200 Hudson St., at Canal St. (212-601-1000)—Jan. 9: **Gokh-Bi System, Las Rubias del Norte, Cordero, Hazmat Modine, Karsh Kale,** and **Slavic Soul Party!** offer a kaleidoscope of global sounds.

NUBLU
62 Avenue C, between 4th and 5th Sts. (212-979-9925)—Jan. 7 and every Wednesday: **Forro in the Dark** brings the blue-collar party music of Brazil's northeastern interior to life. Jan. 10: **Márcio Local** was born in Rio, and he absorbed many of Brazil's urban musical styles, most notably the plush horn-fuelled sound of samba soul. He shows off his warm and cushy baritone on his forthcoming U.S. release, "Márcio Local Says, 'Don Dree Don Day Don Don': Adventures in Samba Soul." The sunny and uplifting record doesn't come out until May, but Local is here now bringing a bit of tropical heat to the winter.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Jan. 9: A Three Kings Day celebration with Los Sone-



LAURENT CILLUFO

DVD NOTES
FROM BIG SCREEN TO SMALL

It's been a great year for Chinese movies, and the best of the year is **"Still Life"** (New Yorker Video), in which the director Jia Zhang-ke dramatizes, with a startling visual beauty, the physical and emotional devastation caused by the massive Three Gorges Dam. As the waters of the Yangtze River are made to rise, towns that are about to be submerged have to be dismantled. The area's biggest business is now demolition, and the planned destruction—which is breathtaking to behold—provides the setting for intertwined stories of personal betrayals, broken family bonds, rampant corruption, and abuses of power. Jia's documentary portrait "Dong," about an artist at work on the banks of the river—which gave rise to "Still Life"—is included as a extra, as is a revealing interview with the director.

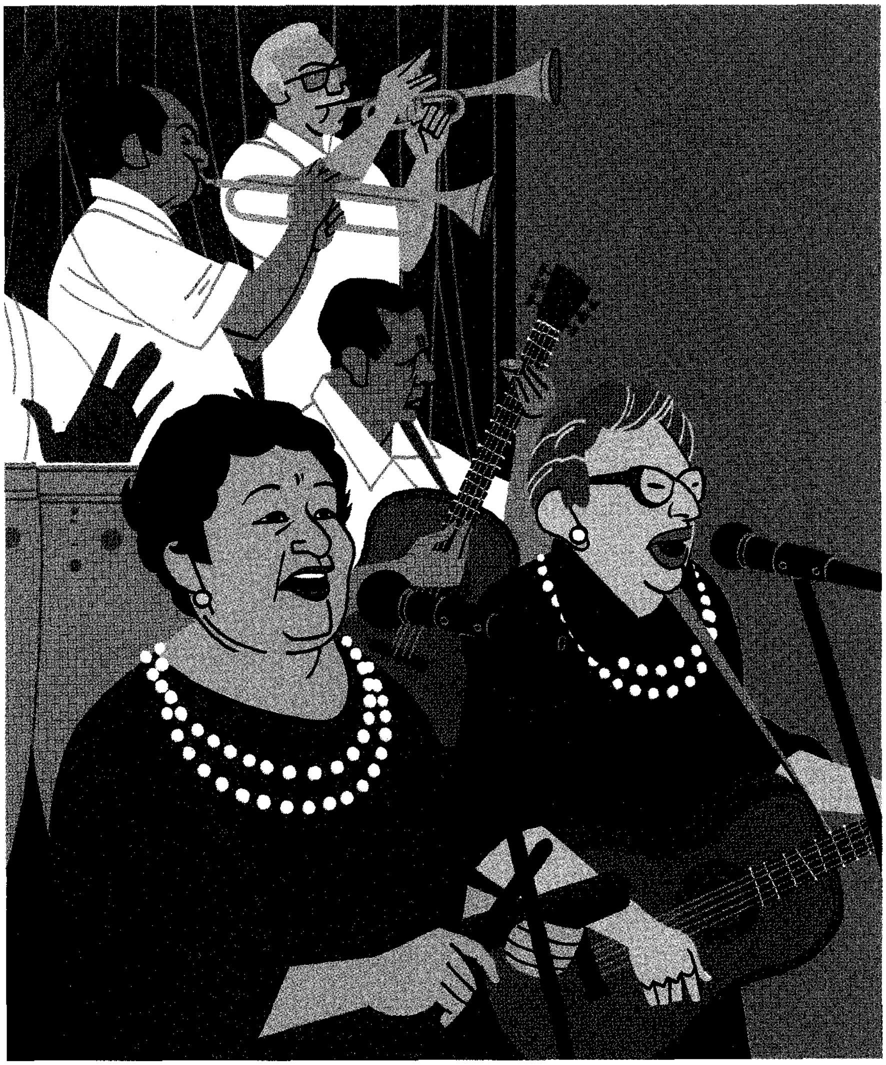
The Chinese director Lou Ye's **"Summer Palace"** (Palm Pictures) offers the best, and perhaps the grimmest, scene of the year: the suicide of a Chinese student in Berlin who has just witnessed a left-wing parade with a banner celebrating Mao. Lou's stunning depiction of her despair at seeing no way out is part of his audacious tale of the 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square and its long-term effects on survivors. After the film was shown at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival, the Chinese government banned Lou from filmmaking in China for five years.

It's also been a great year for the actress Greta Gerwig, the intellectual-boho diva of the "mumblecore" movement, who co-starred in the Duplass brothers' shaggy-dog horror film, **"Baghead"** (Sony), and, with Joe Swanberg, co-directed and co-starred in the romantic drama "Nights and Weekends." Gerwig shines in the title role of Swanberg's 2007 feature, **"Hannah Takes the Stairs"** (IFC Films), as a young playwright who works at a production company and gets involved in an office-romance triangle. The film's documentary-style methods and rich improvisations—especially Gerwig's—vividly portray the lives of young artists very much like the directors and actors themselves. The daringly spontaneous actress is also impressive in **"Yeast"** (available through Amazon video on demand), the first feature directed by Mary Bronstein, who co-starred in the year's best indie feature—"Frownland," directed by her husband, Ronald Bronstein. In "Yeast," Gerwig and Mary Bronstein are joined by Amy Judd in the story of three artistic young New Yorkers struggling with love, money, and adulthood. The tight closeups and hectic handheld camerawork powerfully evoke the women's outer constraints and inner chaos, and Gerwig does a passive-aggressive scene that deserves inclusion in movie anthologies *and* psychology textbooks.

The South Korean director Hong Sang-soo's luminous, understated drama **"Woman on the Beach"** (New Yorker Video) is a personal film of another sort. Unable to write a script, a young director takes an off-season trip to a desolate seaside resort with his production designer, who brings along a girlfriend. Joong-rae's imagination is liberated by his affair with her and its melodramatic aftermath, but at the cost of a terrible blow to his ego. Hong's refined, puckish style is attuned to every pang of his self-critical self-portrait.

With David Fincher's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" currently in theatres, it's worth noting the 2008 DVD release of the director's cut of his previous feature, **"Zodiac"** (Paramount), which shares many of the new film's themes and methods. Both bring a fabulous array of digital technology to bear on the simulation of ordinary life, and both dramatize the passing of time. The investigation by the cartoonist Robert Graysmith (Jake Gyllenhaal) into a series of unsolved killings pushes him into an ever more vivid reconstruction of a past that, for those around him, is quickly fading. Along with commentaries by the director and the star, the set features an extra disk of documentary material about the real-life case.

—Richard Brody



Los Soneros de Oriente enliven a Three Kings Day celebration at S.O.B.'s.

JACOB WEINSTEIN

ros de Oriente. In the seventies, long before the Buena Vista Social Club made Cuban *son* popular, the bandleader and percussionist Armando Sanchez formed Son de la Loma, a band devoted to preserving the dulcet sounds of Cuban folk music. Sanchez died ten years ago, and the baton was passed to Miguel Quintana, who along with his old friend and bass player Leo Flemming formed Los Soneros de Oriente, which had a steady night at Nell's until just a few years ago. Quintana has since died, but the spirit in the band is alive and well. It includes the singers Pedrito Domeche, Lourdes Lopez (a vocal star from the pre-Castro era), and Trinni Marquez (of the famed Hermanas Marquez trio). The trumpeter Ramon (Chiripa) Arcena, an arranger for Son de la Loma, is the leader.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Jan. 8: The Afrobeat inheritor **Femi Kuti**, the son of the genre innovator Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, recently released "Day by Day," his first studio album in seven years. He's headlining here with his powerhouse ensemble, Positive Force. Jan. 11: The annual **GlobalFest** gathering brings the world's top acts to the same stage. This year's edition includes Kuti, **Márcio Local** (see Nublu), and many other musicians.

ZEBULON
258 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn (718-218-6934)—Jan. 9: **Márcio Local** (see Nublu).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Jan. 6-31: The vocalist **Steve Ross** performs "Too Late Now," "Gigi," "I'm Glad I'm Not Young Anymore," "Almost Like Being in Love," and other songs by the lyricist Alan Jay Lerner.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Jan. 6-11: The guitarist **Bill Frisell**, the bassist **Ron Carter**, and the drummer **Paul Motian** reunite three years after the release of their satisfying eponymous recording.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Jan. 6-10: The Brazilian-born pianist and occasional vocalist **Eliane Elias** revisits her roots, drawing from her new album, "Bossa Nova Stories."

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Jan. 8-11: John Coltrane's classic 1957 album "Blue Train" gets a contemporary sheen from **Javon Jackson, Terrel Stafford, George Cables, Lonnie Plaxico, Andrew Cyrille,** and the only living participant in the original session, **Curtis Fuller**. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Jan. 9-10: The pianist **Cedar Walton** and the trumpeter **Roy Hargrove** may be making their Allen Room début, but previous encounters have proven that the veteran keyboardist and the younger horn player share a similar vocabulary based on the lyrical shadings of hard bop.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Jan. 8: The atypical but highly effective jazz trio of **Edmar Castaneda**, on Colombian harp, **Marshall Gilkes**, on trombone, and **David Silliman**, on percussion. Jan. 9: The saxophonist **Tim Ries** takes on the music of his most recent employer, the Rolling Stones, as he reworks their classic rock for jazz ensemble. Vocals will be handled by the fado singer **Ana Moura** and the Stones backup vocalist **Bernard Fowler.** Jan. 10-11: The Beninese guitar sensation **Lionel Loueke** employs an unorthodox, homegrown technique that draws on both jazz and African styles. The bassist **Massimo Biolcati** and the drummer **Ferenc Nemeth** round out his tight-knit trio. The Mingus tribute bands are in rotation here on Mondays.

(LE) POISSON ROUGE
158 Bleecker St. (212-796-0741)—Jan. 10: The drummer **Jeff (Tain) Watts** fronts a quartet featuring the trumpeter **Terence Blanchard,** the bassist **Christian McBride,** and the saxophonist **Prometheus Jenkins** for a night of music from the leader's upcoming, politically charged album, "Watts." (This show is part of the Winter JazzFest, an annual gathering with shows here and elsewhere; for a full schedule visit www.winterjazzfest.com.)

"LYRICS & LYRICISTS"
The 92nd Street Y's look at the Great American Songbook gets under way for the season with a program devoted to Richard Rodgers and his various collaborators, including the songwriter and director **Martin Charnin,** the last lyricist to have worked with the composer on Broadway before his death, in 1979. Charnin is hosting this program with the vocalists **Shelly Burch, Michelle Liu Coughlin, Rich Gray, Hugh Panaro,** and **Alton White.** (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Jan. 10-12.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Jan. 6-11: The inventive jazz guitarist **Kurt Rosenwinkel** can often be heard in tandem with the saxophonist Mark Turner, but here he leads a lean quartet highlighted by the piano playing of **Aaron Parks.**

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C."** Through March 15. ♦ **"The Philippe de Montebello Years: Curators Celebrate Three Decades of Acquisitions."** Through Feb. 1. ♦ **"Art and Love in Renaissance Italy."** Through Feb. 16. ♦ **"Raqib Shaw."** Through March 1. ♦ **"Calder Jewelry."** Through March 1. ♦ **"Reality Check."** Through March 22. ♦ **"Choirs of Angels: Painting in Italian Choir Books, 1300-1500."** The practice of choral-manuscript illumination flourished in Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, then floundered when Italian monasteries were secularized under Napoleon and choir books were disbound. What may sound like a mild-mannered art form was anything but. Some of these exquisitely limned pages could double as storyboards for a horror film about the gruesome mechanics of martyrdom. St. Agatha's bloody breast is gripped in a vise; St. Bartholomew is flayed; St. Paul is beheaded in the lower curve of a flame-orange letter "S." St. Stephen, stoned to death, is mercifully depicted a bit more symbolically—with rocks perched on his head. Through April 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Marlene Dumas: Measuring Your Own Grave."** Through Feb. 16. ♦ **"Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting, 1927-1937."** Through Jan. 12. ♦ **"Pipilotti Rist: Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)."** Through Feb. 2. ♦ **"Vik Muniz: Rebus."** Through Feb. 23. ♦ **"Focus: Sol LeWitt."** The late artist's wall drawings—he conceived more than twelve hundred—are getting a lot of play these days. A luminous installation is now on view at Dia:Beacon, and MASS MOCA recently unveiled an extraordinary retrospective that will be up for twenty-five years. The 1975 piece here, from MOMA's collection, is a pretty basic affair. It fills a single gallery and consists of white crayon on black

walls drawn, according to the artist's instructions, in "arcs from corners and sides" and "straight, not-straight, and broken lines." It's not as intricate or transporting as some of LeWitt's other pieces, but it's a fine introduction to the unexpected beauty that a systems-based approach can reveal. Through June 29. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8. Open Jan. 12 until 8:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Theanyspacewhatever."** Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"Catherine Opie: American Photographer."** Through Jan. 7. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs and Video, 1961-2008."** Through Jan. 25. ♦ **"Alexander Calder: The Paris Years, 1926-1933."** Through Feb. 15. ♦ **"Alex Bag."** Opens Jan. 9. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"The Black List Project: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders and Elvis Mitchell."** Through March 29. ♦ **"Gilbert & George."** Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Climate Change: The Threat to Life and a New Energy Future."** Through Aug. 16. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 25. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

DIA AT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA
Audubon Terrace, Broadway at 155th St. (212-926-2234)—**"Zoe Leonard: Derrotero."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 4:30, and Sundays, 1 to 4.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theatre, 1919-1949."** Through March 22. ♦ **"The Dead Sea Scrolls: Mysteries of the Ancient World."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"The Hanukkah Project: The Sound of Light by Julianne Swartz."** Through March 1. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Protecting the Word: Bookbindings of the Morgan."** Through March 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Mary Heilmann: To Be Someone."** Through Jan. 26. ♦ **"Live Forever: Elizabeth Peyton."** Through Jan. 11. ♦ **"Museum as Hub: Six Degrees."** Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

ONASSIS CULTURAL CENTER
645 Fifth Ave., at 51st St. (212-486-4448)—**"Worshipping Women: Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens."** Through May 9. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

SCULPTURECENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"The Space of the Work and the Place of the Object."** Opens Jan. 11. ♦ **"In Practice."** Opens Jan. 11. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Barkley L. Hendricks: Birth of the Cool."** Through March 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

DANIEL MASCLET
The work of this little-known modernist photographer (1892-1969) appears to come from a uniquely (if not stereotypically) French sensibility—he's part flâneur, part sensualist. This choice group of images made between 1922 and 1964 brings Doisneau, Kertész, and Man Ray to mind, and several androgynous portraits of Masclet's wife, Francesca, recall Claude Cahun at her most mesmerizing. Whether the subject is a scattering of dead leaves, a peeling plaster wall, or a female nude feigning sleep, the photographs are quiet, assured, and unfailingly elegant. Through Feb. 14. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

Short List

ROBERT KUSHNER: D.C. Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-247-2111. Opens Jan. 8. **EVA LUNDSAGER:** Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444. Opens Jan. 8. **AD REINHARDT / TONY SMITH:** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through Jan. 24.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

NATHALIE DJURBERG
Bruno Bettleheim wrote that, in fairy tales, "we soon discover the inner turmoils of our soul." The same could be said of the perverse enchantments in Djurberg's stop-motion animations. The Swedish artist's absurdist videos hinge on tales of innocence beset by the macabre. A ballerina dances around a table laden with sweets—and is drowned by a torrent of candle wax. The film's set, exhibited here as a sculptural installation, is surrounded by walls painted with excremental smears of brown. In another video, based on charcoal drawings, a young woman wanders into a forest, is strangled by predatory trees, and is left to rot. Life according to Djurberg is darkly enchanted—full of fantastical snares. Through Jan. 24. (Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

JACOB FEIGE
Hudson River-school landscapes meet seventies album covers—and it's a surprisingly good match. Psychedelic spheres and pyramids hover above a majestic hillside and an ocean sunset—sites, we're told, that have autobiographical significance for the artist. They're painted, however, with a deliberately generic-looking, pseudo-airbrushed flatness, and although the floating shapes are distinct in each image—geodesic domes, "Dark Side of the Moon" prisms, stylized evocations of sunspots—they eventually blur into a single trippy vibe. Through Jan. 10. (Lombard Fried, 531 W. 26th St. 212-967-8040.)

CHRISTOPH GIELEN
This German-born, New York-based photographer shows large color images of the contemporary overbuilt environment, from California's suburban sprawl to Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Berlin. His aerial shots, although not particularly original, are fascinating for their clarity and detail. On the outskirts of Los Angeles, dense warrens of tract homes are distinguished primarily by their back-yard pools, while overlapping highways look like a box of tangled silver ribbons. Other photographs bring us back down to earth, but the sights are no less alienating. Looking up at a few lighted windows in an otherwise dark Kowloon high-rise, you can imagine yourself to be the last person on earth. Through Jan. 31. (Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158.)

WINGATE PAINE
Paine's 1966 book of photographs, "Mirror of Venus," is a classic of soft-core erotica and a sexual-revolution period piece. More than seventy-five color and black-and-white prints from that book and its several follow-ups are gathered here for Paine's first solo exhibition, and they look charmingly innocent by today's standards. Working with a trio of regular models, the photographer was able to achieve a sense of sweet, playful intimacy and suggest moments of sexual abandon. The work is self-consciously arty and not a little kitsch, but it never asks to be taken seriously, only enjoyed, and that's easy. Through Jan. 17. (Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978.)

LEO RUBINFIEN
Rubinfien began this series of "Wounded Cities" photographs after fleeing from his home near the

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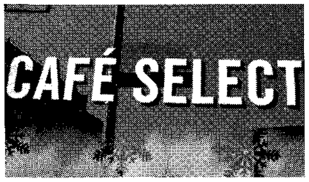
TABLES FOR TWO
CAFÉ SELECT



HONORE BROWN

212 Lafayette St. (212-925-9322)—Oyster Bar aside, the anticipation of delicious food and pleasing ambience is not usually accompanied by thinking, "Ah, the train station." Yet in Switzerland, from Bern to Basel to Zurich, some popular restaurants have been housed in *der Bahnhof*. At the Swiss bistro Café Select, in Nolita, the latest venture of the restaurateur Serge Becker—a partner at La Esquina, the taco stand/café/secret subterranean tequila den across the street—there is an unmistakable air of European metropolitanism. The space is decked out with wooden and black leather banquettes, red and black Formica café tables, and a marble bar with a kiosk selling Swiss snacks, like Shorley apple soda and *Basler Läckerli* biscuits. Broad windows and the substantial Rolex clock hanging in the middle of the room lend to the appealing *à la gare* feel during the day; the lights dim to an amber glow at night, abetted by a carefully curated, eclectic playlist (creditable to the co-owners, the Swiss d.j.s Oliver Stumm and Dominique Clausen).

The menu is rife with unrecognizable Swiss German appellations for homey Swiss soul foods, like *Chäschüechile* (a delectable Emmentaler-Gruyère-Swiss-cheese tart with a caramelized crust) and *Flädli* soup, a fortifying beef consommé garnished with savory strips of buckwheat crêpe, which satisfies a salt craving while restoring one's health. An appetizer of poached marrow, served in the bone, to be scooped and slathered on garlic toast and sprinkled with roasted-scallion-infused salt, melts like butter. The entrées include faithful renditions: Zurich veal, pounded and smothered in creamy mushroom sauce, served with crunchy-soft spätzle; a fine veal brat, with *Rösti*, a crispy potato cake as big as a salad plate. Entrecôte "Café Select," a center-cut strip steak, rivals any bar steak in the city; beef "Silvia" does the same for arugula-and-steak salad.

With bonuses like the *Ski Wasser*, a fizzy elderflower-and-vodka-infused lemonade, and a festive Sunday-night fondue special, Café Select offers a respite in a neighborhood surprisingly limited in bistro standbys (the inevitable hour-plus-long wait at Balthazar excludes it from consideration). It may not be the Jungfraujoch, but it does make for a lovely morning: a *Laugen* croissant and a latte at the bar, sunlight streaming through the front windows, watching time tick away—because, really, where do you have to be? (Open Mondays through Fridays for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and Saturdays and Sundays for brunch and dinner. Entrées $14-$25.)

—*Shauna Lyon*

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
NO-GOODNIKS

C. P. Taylor's celebrated 1981 play, "Good," about a literature professor in thirties Germany who drifts into complicity with the Nazis, is meant to be an indictment of moral cowardice and compromise, but the movie adaptation, written by John Wrathall and directed by Vicente Amorim (now playing at Village East Cinemas), has undergone an ironic catastrophe. As the well-meaning but weak-willed professor, Viggo Mortensen doesn't seem to understand anything that's said to him; he pauses and fumbles and falls into vacancies. In fact, all the characters, including the Nazi officials and officers, seem merely stupid, as if they were inadequate protagonists in the roles that history had set out for them. The large-scale production is handsome but sluggish, and the staging veers from inappropriate scrambling comedy to an almost sadistic abuse of the audience's tolerance for pain. It's good to see a really disastrous film every now and then: it makes one appreciate the modest victories of people with the skill to make a decent movie.

—*David Denby*

RACHEL DOMM

World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. He wasn't the only one searching the faces of strangers on the street for signs of shared humanity, but he didn't stop with Manhattan; he also walked the pavements of Tokyo, Jerusalem, Benares, and elsewhere. Because Rubinfien zeroes in on figures seen in passing, his work echoes that of William Klein, Beat Streuli, and Philip-Lorca diCorcia and invites us to read something—anything—into expressions that are often unreadable. Huge prints undermine images that work best on a more intimate scale, so the accompanying book is a welcome alternative. Through Jan. 31. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 212-898-7600.)

JOSEF STRAU
Is art a site of spiritual illumination or a den of iniquity? Strau has it both ways in these assemblages of lamps and rickety tables, automatic drawings, text-heavy posters, and strings of fake pearls. Several giant constructions made of cardboard shipping boxes and slabs of blue Styrofoam suggest children's forts, while also representing letters (there's a "J," an "L," and an "E"). It's unclear what the alphabetical sequence portends, but the multiple texts reference Catholic confession, Joseph and his coat of many colors, and a spirit called the Angel of Subculture. Through Jan. 10. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

Short List

NOBUYOSHI ARAKI: 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Opens Jan. 8. **DANA HOEY:** Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Jan. 24. **FAIRFIELD PORTER / ANDREW FORGE:** Cuningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772. Through Jan. 31. **SARA GREENBERGER RAFFERTY:** The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Opens Jan. 9. **"EVERY REVOLUTION IS A ROLL OF THE DICE":** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Opens Jan. 8. **"ORGANIC GEOMETRY":** Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-3335. Through Jan. 10.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

NAYLAND BLAKE
Nestled amid the dried vegetal arrangements, glass boxes, and dangling panty hose (which conjure relics, votives, and shrines) in this terrific twenty-five-year survey is an abundance of rabbits. There are stuffed bunnies, plastic bottles in cartoon rabbit shapes, a cotton-tailed gold lamé suit, and black Inquisition hoods with floppy ears. Blake is no heavy-handed moralist—his art's too entertaining—but clues abound as to what the bunnies might signify: a celebration of unbridled homosexuality in a repressive political climate; the cycles of birth and death, hope and loss made even more poignant by the advent of AIDS. Through Feb. 14. (Location One, 26 Greene St. 212-334-3347.)

DANIEL GUZMÁN
Scrappy sculptures and a video titled "El Secreto del Mal," after a Roberto Bolaño book, allude to the lingering influence of Aztec culture in Guzmán's native Mexico City, the plight of indigenous people, drug wars, political corruption, and U.S. imperialism. Objects in the shape of Aztec ceremonial pyres are festooned with shards of pottery, *lucha libre* masks, and Spanish-language Kiss album covers. The video features stock Bolaño characters—a poet and a political activist—as well as comically absurd zombies dressed as revolutionaries and a rocker in a Ramones T-shirt. Unfortunately, unlike the late Chilean writer to whom he pays homage, Guzmán settles for style over substance. Through Jan. 10. (Harris Lieberman, 89 Vandam St. 212-206-1290.)

Short List

JOSÉ LEÓN CERRILLO: Dispatch, 127 Henry St. 212-227-2783. Through Jan. 31. **PAM LINS:** Uffner, 47 Orchard St. 212-274-0064. Through Feb. 8. **R. H. QUAYTMAN:** Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-2302. Through Feb. 1.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Ballets in which a female dancer impersonates a doll are no rarity—think "Petrouchka," "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "The Nutcracker"—but perhaps the greatest doll ballet of all is "Coppélia," derived from E. T. A. Hoffmann's sinister "Der Sandmann." Balanchine created his "Coppélia" for N.Y.C.B. in 1974, with Alexandra Danilova, one of the great Swanildas (the heroine) of her time. Starting Jan. 7, it alternates with an all-Balanchine program that includes the marvellously inventive leotard ballet "The Four Temperaments," from 1946. Casts appear on the company's Web site a week in advance. ♦ Jan. 7 and Jan. 13 at 7:30, Jan. 10 at 2, and Jan. 11 at 3: "Coppélia." ♦ Jan. 8-10 at 8: "Chaconne," "The Four Temperaments," and "Vienna Waltzes." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through March 1.)

"DANCE ON CAMERA"
At the Walter Reade, amidst the myriad options for cinephiles and dance enthusiasts alike are new documentary portraits of Jerome Robbins and the legendary flamenco choreographer Antonio Gades; four filmed-for-TV dance works by the Czech contemporary choreographer Jirí Kylián; a meditation on the Indian dance form *mohiniattam* ("Dance of the Enchantress"); a Busby Berkeley picture featuring the Brazilian samba goddess Carmen Miranda ("The Gang's All Here"); and a French documentary exploring the mystique and travails of several Kirov ballerinas of our time, including Svetlana Zakharova, Diana Vishneva, and Ulyana Lopatkina. For a complete schedule, visit www.filmlinc.com. (Lincoln Center. 212-727-0764. Jan. 6-17.)

PARSONS DANCE COMPANY
If David Parsons and his dancers don't please you, it won't be for lack of trying. Two alternating programs include repertory pieces such as the signature strobe-light workout "Caught" and the as yet untitled season première, which features the East Village Opera Company, playing and singing famous arias in pop-rock arrangements—doing to the classical repertory something similar to what Parsons does to dance. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 6-7 at 7:30, Jan. 8-9 at 8, Jan. 10 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 11 at 2 and 7:30. Through Jan. 18.)

"SUGAR SALON"
In the interest of nurturing female choreographers, this annual program chooses an established member of that group as a mentor for three less established ones. Serving in the elder role this year, Jane Comfort presents an excerpt from her recent piece "An American Rendition," which instructively juxtaposes the cruelty of secret detention with that of reality shows. As for the young hopefuls, Deganit Shemy sets up a game with strict rules confined to a small square of light, Anna Sperber hones in on sensory details, and Heather Olson tries to find hints of emotion underneath abstraction. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 212-352-3101. Jan. 7-9 at 8:30.)

CEDAR LAKE CONTEMPORARY BALLET
During its two-week winter season, this well-funded company offers a triple bill, including two stylish world premières. In "Frame of View," the Dutch choreographer Didy Veldman uses an angular and expressionistic movement style to explore the ways we manipulate our emotions for others; Luca Veggetti's characteristically spare, sleek, and abstract piece "Memory/Measure" is set to a dense, almost sculptural soundscape. The troupe also performs last season's "Ten Duets on a Theme of Rescue," by the Forsythe-influenced Canadian choreographer Crystal Pite. (547 W. 26th St. 212-868-4444. Jan. 8-12 at 8. Through Jan. 18.)

JAPAN SOCIETY CONTEMPORARY DANCE SHOWCASE
In recent years, the annual series has expanded its purview to countries neighboring Japan—with some diminishment in the strangeness, chastening, or mere entertainment for which the event became known. From Taiwan comes Wu I-Fang, the long-

time star of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, offering the handsome, video-magnified work of his Wind Dance Theatre. From Korea, Jang Eun Jung joins her company in what looks like an elegant game of red light/green light. The Japanese contingent ranges from the familiar Butoh of Ko Murobushi to the vamping of Yoko Higashino, in a baby-doll dress with red hair covering her face, to the Generation Y navel-gazing of the Chelfitsch Theatre Company, with its bored-in-the-office piece, "Air Conditioner." (333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. Jan. 9 at 7:30 and Jan. 10 at 5 and 8.)

DD DORVILLIER / HUMAN FUTURE DANCE CORPS
In "Choreography, a Prologue for the Apocalypse of Understanding, Get Ready!," the phenomenologically minded choreographer addresses language and understanding—as in: what does it mean when an audience member says, "I don't understand." The three-part work begins with a film, just words on a screen, followed by a duet in which a translator, ever more freely, translates first Dorvillier's words and then her movements from English to Spanish. In the final section, language is represented by shapes made by a far from silent dancing quartet, who, in contrast to the black-and-white of the film, emerge in four colors. Zeena Parkins provides the score. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Jan. 10-11 at 7:30. Through Jan. 17.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
It's no surprise that the choreographer Christopher Wheeldon is drawn to the music of Arvo Pärt, with its balance of emotional density and compositional minimalism. In the dance portion of this program devoted to Pärt's music at the Guggenheim, three New York City Ballet dancers closely associated with Wheeldon—Wendy Whelan, Albert Evans, and Sébastien Marcovici—will perform two highly evocative Pärt-inspired works by Wheeldon, "Liturgy" and "After the Rain Pas de Deux." (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Jan. 11-12 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
When Puccini's "lyrical comedy," **"La Rondine"** (which, in its light touch, sometimes approaches the world of operetta), was given its U.S. première at the Met, in 1928, the cast was headed by the incomparable Lucrezia Bori and Beniamino Gigli. Reviving it in the composer's hundred-and-fiftieth-anniversary year, the company turns to two contemporary stars, Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna, who have made it a specialty; Marco Armiliato, a reliable hand in Italian repertory, conducts, leading the Met orchestra in the score's dance numbers (tango, foxtrot, Parisian waltz) and melodic flights. (Jan. 7 and Jan. 13 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 1.) ♦ John Cox's new production of Massenet's **"Thaïs"**—an efficiently structured study of sex and religion that exudes elegance from every pore—gives the Met stage all the grandeur of a nineteen-twenties movie palace. Renée Fleming, newly slim and dressed by Christian Lacroix, leaves her trademark vocal mannerisms behind, offering a performance of focussed sound and captivating character. With the excellent Thomas Hampson and Michael Schade; Jesús López-Cobos conducts with passion and care. (Jan. 8 at 8. This is the final performance.) ♦ Spare, compact, and firmly lyrical, Gluck's **"Orfeo ed Euridice"** is a bracing early-Classical-era tonic amidst a sea of florid Handelian entertainments—especially in Mark Morris's enchanting 2007 production. His choreography, executed by members of the Mark Morris Dance Group, is interspersed with performances by a trio of formidable singers: Danielle de Niese, Heidi Grant Murphy, and Stephanie Blythe; James Levine. (Jan. 9 at 8.) ♦ The final performance this season of **"La Bohème,"** with Maija Kovalevska, Susanna Phillips, Massimo Giordano, and Mariusz Kwiecien; Frédéric Chaslin. (Jan. 10 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

"WORKS & PROCESS" SERIES
Music-theatre works by Arvo Pärt (**"L'Abbé Agathon,"** featuring the soprano Lauren Flanigan) and Tarik O'Regan (**"The Wanton Sublime,"** in progress) are on the bill of the next iteration of the Guggenheim Museum's stylish performance series, which also includes choreographed versions (by Christopher Wheeldon) of two Pärt classics, "Fratres" and "Spiegel im Spiegel." (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Jan. 11-12 at 7:30.)

AMATO OPERA: "THE MERRY WIDOW"
Since Lehár's operetta is always diverting around holiday time, it might be fun to catch one of the final performances at Anthony Amato's tiny East Village theatre, which boasts a cast of robust professionals and amateurs. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Jan. 10 at 7:30 and Jan. 11 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Olli Mustonen, the riveting (if idiosyncratic) Finnish pianist, offers two very different concerted works—Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 11 in F Major and Messiaen's "Oiseaux Exotiques"—in a program conducted by Ludovic Morlot that also includes Tristan Murail's "Gondwana" (in its U.S. première) and Debussy's "La Mer." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Jan. 8 at 7:30, Jan. 9 at 2, and Jan. 10 at 8.)

AMERICAN CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA
Robert Levin, known for his richly ornamented renditions of Mozart's piano concertos, is the soloist in the early-music band's performance of the Concerto No. 24 in C Minor, part of a concert conducted by Thomas Crawford that concludes with Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, "Pastorale." (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. www.aconyc.org. Jan. 8 at 8.)

RECITALS

COREY DARGEL'S "REMOVABLE PARTS"
A note of decadence (and a dollop of pop music) infuses Dargel's theatrical song cycle about a brokenhearted man who embraces voluntary amputation. Dargel performs it, in cabaret style, with the pianist Kathleen Supové (and direction by Emma Griffin) at the HERE Arts Center. (Sixth Ave. at Spring St. www.here.org. Jan. 7-9 at 7, Jan. 10 at 7 and 10, and Jan. 11 at 1 and 5.)

BROOKLYN CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY
The violinist Yonah Zur, the cellist Raman Ramakrishnan, and the pianist Molly Morkoski perform piano trios by Debussy, Schoenberg ("Verklärte Nacht," in the arrangement by Steuermann), and Schumann (No. 1 in D Minor) at the First Unitarian Church in Brooklyn Heights. (Pierrepont St. at Monroe Pl. Jan. 9 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

BARGEMUSIC
Jan. 9 at 8: The barge, having established its "Here and Now" concerts of contemporary music, moves on to early music with a new series, "There and Then." It's inaugurated by the Repast Baroque Ensemble, offering intimate works by Leclair (the Trio Sonata in D Major, Op. 2, No. 8), Rameau, and Couperin, among others. ♦ Jan. 10 at 8 and Jan. 11 at 3: Two seasoned colleagues—the violinist Mark Peskanov and the cellist Clive Greensmith (of the Tokyo String Quartet) join the exciting Shanghai Quartet for what will be vigorous performances of the string sextets of Johannes Brahms. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Jan. 9 at 8: The sharp young virtuosos of MMArtists in Concert (featuring the pianist Reiko Aizawa, the violist Nicholas Cords, and the cellist Edward Arron) celebrate this year's Haydn and Mendelssohn anniversaries, performing music by both of them (includ-

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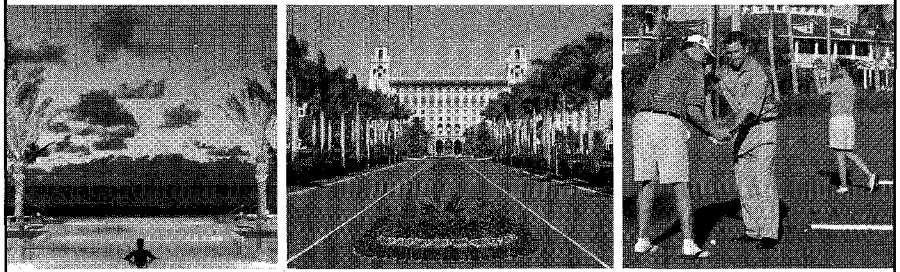

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ing Haydn's Piano Trio No. 14 in A-Flat Major) in addition to Brahms's Piano Quartet in A Major and a work by the Uzbek composer Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky. ♦ Jan. 11 at 8: Olli Mustonen, appearing this week with the New York Philharmonic, performs Tchaikovksy's "The Seasons," for piano solo (as well as a work of his own), before joining several of the orchestra's musicians in Shostakovich's Piano Quintet. (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949.)

CARPE DIEM STRING QUARTET
The enterprising young quartet, appearing at the Nabi Gallery, performs a suite of new music by the admired classical and jazz composer Bruce Wolosoff ("Songs Without Words"). (137 W. 25th St. Jan. 10 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: BRADLEY BROOKSHIRE
In "Bach the Progressive," the superb New York harpsichordist shakes up Johann Sebastian's image as a conservative, mixing some of his more radical works (including the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue) with pieces by two of his sons, W. F. and C. P. E. Bach. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Jan. 11 at 4.)

MET CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
Only the formidable musicianship of James Levine's orchestral all-stars could make a program like this work: modernist song cycles by Dallapiccola and Elliott Carter ("In the Distances of Sleep," after Wallace Stevens), two Strauss waltzes ("Emperor" and "Roses from the South"), and Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll." The singers Grazia Doronzio and Kate Lindsey join them. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 11 at 5.)

NINE CIRCLES CHAMBER THEATRE: "FALLING BODIES"
An imaginary meeting between two Italian titans, Galileo Galilei and Primo Levi (portrayed by the actors Bill Camp and Kathleen McElfresh), is the basis for this fanciful yet serious play with music (featuring the violinist Gil Morgenstern) by the writer Jonathan Levi and the composer Bruce Saylor. (Rubin Museum of Art, 150 W. 17th St. 212-620-5000, ext. 344. Jan. 11 at 6.)

"GIL SHAHAM AND FRIENDS"
The commanding violinist joins friends and family (including his sister, the pianist Orli Shaham) in an all-Brahms concert that features one oddity, the "F.A.E" Sonata, a collaboration between Brahms and his composer friends Schumann and Dietrich. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 13 at 7:30)

MOVIES OPENING

BRIDE WARS
A comedy, directed by Gary Winick, about two friends who become enemies when their weddings are scheduled for the same day. Starring Anne Hathaway and Kate Hudson. Opening Jan. 9. (In wide release.)

HELLRAISER
A remake of the 1987 horror film, based on Clive Barker's novella "The Hellbound Heart," in which a woman helps her dead lover escape from Hell. Directed by Pascal Laugier. Opening Jan. 9. (In wide release.)

JUST ANOTHER LOVE STORY
A thriller, directed by Ole Bornedal, about a man who impersonates a brain-damaged woman's lover. In Danish. Opening Jan. 9. (Cinema Village.)

NOT EASILY BROKEN
Bill Duke directed this drama, about a couple who endure the aftereffects of a car accident. Starring Morris Chestnut, Taraji P. Henson, Maeve Quinlan, and Cannon Jay. Opening Jan. 9. (In wide release.)

SILENT LIGHT
A drama, directed by Carlos Reygadas and set in Mexico's Mennonite community, about a married farmer who takes a lover. In Plautdietsch. Opening Jan. 7. (Film Forum.)

THE UNBORN
David S. Goyer wrote and directed this thriller, about a spirit that takes possession of a young woman. Starring Odette Yustman, Gary Oldman, and Carla Gugino. Opening Jan. 9. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON
A child is born in New Orleans in 1918 with the features and internal organs of an old man; then, as time passes, his age declines until he goes through late middle age, middle age, youth, and so on, back toward infancy and death. This science-fiction reverse-aging conceit, from an early F. Scott Fitzgerald story, has been rendered by the writer Eric Roth and the director David Fincher with a fanatical literalness that occasionally touches on the uncanny but often feels laborious and even pedantic. As Benjamin becomes younger, he turns into the handsome, fortyish Brad Pitt, and he has an affair with a vibrant, normally aging dancer (Cate Blanchett). They meet in the middle, so to speak, but the relationship is odd, since, instead of the fervent memories of youth, Benjamin has only the relief that he is no longer a crotchety old man. He's bland; he's Brad Pitt. There is much else, about New Orleans, the sea, and many other things, but the movie is an attenuated folly. With Tilda Swinton. The amber-hued cinematography is by Claudio Miranda.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

"Tokyo, 2002, at Shibuya Station," by Leo Rubinfien, at Mann.

DAMES
In 1934, with Roosevelt safely in office, Warner Bros. set this Busby Berkeley backstage musical in the world of the rich—in order to mock them. The silly yet sour plot, about a family awaiting a ten-million-dollar gift from a wealthy cousin who is launching a moral crusade to close down New York's theatres—just as their daughter, unbeknownst to him, is planning her stage début—turns on blackmail. But the movie belongs to Berkeley and his wondrous production numbers, which are all erotic fantasies. "The Girl at the Ironing Board," a washerwoman's dream of love at the clothesline, ends with a mass ravishing that will make you think twice about sending your underwear out to be laundered. "I Only Have Eyes for You" starts as a romantic subway symphony and turns into a spectacle of sexual monomania, with Ruby Keeler's face multiplying and filling the screen before giving way to the woman herself—whose skirt Berkeley's camera peers up to reveal a suggestive array of irises and ovals. The title number, a balletic day in the life of a showgirl, gives rise to one of Berkeley's greatest visual inventions, a white background festooned with dancing girls' black-clad legs—which rhythmically open and close to yield up a flying wedge of pubic rapture, ending with a black hole—at the end of which is a dancer dressed in baby clothes. It suggests nothing less than "The Origin of the World."—*Richard Brody* (Walter Reade; Jan. 10.)

DEFIANCE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

DOUBT
John Patrick Shanley adapts his own Broadway play for the screen, although moviegoers may feel that he hasn't adapted it enough. The year is 1964, the place is a Catholic school in the Bronx, and the problem is that Sister Aloysius (Meryl Streep), the resident dragon, is breathing fire. The particular target of her wrath is Father Flynn (Philip Seymour Hoffman), whom she suspects of having molested an altar boy. We are meant to see this as a solemn parable of belief—of its capacity both to grow without rational evidence and to fester without cause. Instead, we merely get to watch a pair of seasoned performers stage a demonstration match; this is won by Streep, of course, who comes across as a red-eyed compound of the Abbess from "The Sound of Music" and the Bride of Frankenstein. Stuck in between them, in the thankless role of umpire, is the kindly Sister James (Amy Adams), who doesn't stand a chance. The result is at once humorless and risible; one small nudge, and it could have toppled over into camp.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/15/08.) (In wide release.)

FROST/NIXON
In its transfer from stage to film, Peter Morgan's account of David Frost's lengthy set of interviews with Richard Nixon, in 1977, three years after he resigned the Presidency, has taken on an aura of momentousness unwarranted by the event itself. Frank Langella's performance provides considerable insights into Nixon's intelligence, caginess, and fraudulent sentimentality, and Michael Sheen makes Frost into a toothy, bright, shallow but smart showman-journalist. The interviews themselves, always absorbing, build to Nixon's climactic admission that he let the country down

during the Watergate crisis. The media whirl of negotiation, advisers, preparation, and so on is engaging enough, but the episode itself changed nothing. It was a journalistic coup, not a historical milestone, and the filmmakers don't seem to realize that. Directed by Ron Howard.—*D.D.* (12/8/08) (In wide release.)

GRAN TORINO
Clint Eastwood appears as, in effect, the last white man in America, guarding what might be called the last American car—a green 1972 Ford Gran Torino, lovingly preserved in his garage in run-down Highland Park, just outside Detroit. Eastwood, who also directed, stars as Walt Kowalski, a racist old man who lives next door to a family of Asian immigrants. At first, Walt (a vision of what Dirty Harry might have become) is their antagonist, but he then becomes their protector, as he helps them fight off the neighborhood gangs. The movie ends with a surprising act of renunciation. Although it's a minor work, the film is fascinating if you're interested in Eastwood's reflections on the characters he's played and his role in American iconography. With Bee Vang as the kid who becomes Walt's surrogate son. Written by Nick Schenk.—*D.D.* (12/22 & 29/08) (In wide release.)

THE IRON MASK
Douglas Fairbanks stars as D'Artagnan in an unabashedly emotional adaptation, from 1929, of Alexandre Dumas's final saga of the Three Musketeers—the one about Louis XIV's secretly jailed twin brother. Unlike later adapters of the tale, Fairbanks and the director, Allan Dwan, emphasize the panache of the Musketeers rather than the claustrophobic horror of the prisoner in the iron mask. Their salute to camaraderie treats the motto "All for one and one for all" with fervor and humor: at night, the heroes collapse into the same quadruple bed. Ultimately the movie's sentiment-filled swashbuckling achieves a cornball grandeur. As the spirits of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis welcome D'Artagnan into heaven, the final title reads "The Beginning"—but it was Fairbanks's last silent film and the glorious end of his reign as Hollywood's most gallant action hero. The picture was released with a spoken prologue and recorded music and sound effects.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; Jan. 9 and Jan. 12.)

MADE IN U.S.A.
In 1966, Jean-Luc Godard threw together, in mere weeks, this hectic, self-flagellating political fantasy, based loosely on a novel by Donald Westlake as well as on the widely reported kidnapping of the Moroccan left-wing activist Mehdi Ben Barka. The slapdash spontaneity of the production helped Godard unleash a host of frenzies—political, cinematic, and personal. He cast his ex-wife, Anna Karina, as a journalist in search of her former lover, a political activist who, like Ben Barka, disappeared (and whose tape-recorded voice is Godard's own). The patchy plot of cartoonish Cold War skulduggery involves a couple of secret agents with the Hollywood monickers of Siegel and Widmark (played by the French New Wave icons Jean-Pierre Léaud and László Szabó), a novelist named after the noir writer David Goodis (Yves Afonso, a Jean-Paul Belmondo look-alike), and two young *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics playing Richard Nixon and Robert McNamara. With a color scheme of agitprop Mondrian, a background of blankly suffocating spaces, a barroom lesson in semiology featuring the young Marianne Faithfull's a-cappella rendition of "As Tears Go By," and a deluge of political rhetoric, Godard evokes a chaotic new world of deadly abstractions, artistic impasses, and insoluble conflicts. His luminous, longing closeups of Karina show who really was desperately seeking whom. In French.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; Jan. 9-22.)

MILK
Gus Van Sant's vibrantly entertaining bio-pic re-creates, without starchiness, the San Francisco life of the gay activist and politician Harvey Milk (Sean Penn), who was assassinated in 1978, along with Mayor George Moscone, by a fellow-politician, the family-values conservative Dan White (Josh Brolin). The righteous march of events is warmed by the banter, the casual sex, and the candor of the gay milieu in the giddy seventies, the period just before AIDS, when life was free and easy. Much of the time, Penn keeps his voice down, but the fervor and humor are there in the most offhanded moments. Without ostentation, he creates a new body, a new temperament: he loosens his neck and shoulders and swivels his head; his smile is enormous and all-embracing; he holds an elbow out and pumps a forearm up and down like a semaphore as Harvey speaks in public. Brolin, a slab of hair lying low across his forehead, gives White a brick-headed, baffled manner, a tormented neediness. In the filmmakers' interpretation, there's a suggestion that White suffered from murderously repressed homosexuality. With James Franco, Emile Hirsch, Diego Luna, and Alison Pill.—*D.D.* (12/1/08) (In limited release.)

THE READER
The British director Stephen Daldry made a splash with "The Hours," and this new film is no less worthy, ambitious, and exasperating. The screenwriter, once again, is David Hare, who fillets the best-selling novel by Bernhard Schlink. For all Hare's expertise, however, we are stuck with the unsavory pretensions of the original tale. Kate Winslet plays Hanna, who, thirteen years after the Second World War, works on the trams in Neustadt, West Germany, and has occasional sex with a local teen-age boy named Michael (David Kross). Their first time, though lingeringly shot, has all the finesse of cheap porno; where else does a woman tell a lusty youth to shed his clothes and take a bath because he has dirt on his face? In the movie's second half, we see Hanna being tried and imprisoned for her wartime deeds; there is a shocking revelation, which comes as no surprise; and the middle-aged Michael (Ralph Fiennes) turns up to help his onetime love. Daldry takes things painfully slowly, not helped by a sappy score, and we are encouraged to muse upon the cultural shortcomings, or even improvements, in the life of an aging member of the S.S. This is not an issue that most of us feel the need to worry about. With a strong performance, late in the day, from Lena Olin.—*A.L.* (12/15/08) (In wide release.)

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD
Commuters in identical gray suits and hats pour like lava through Grand Central Terminal and settle in to work in vast open floors with shaded glass partitions. Cigarettes are lit and furiously smoked; Martinis, consumed by the bucketful, launch anxious bouts of adultery and heartrending quarrels. We're in the fifties, the alleged graveyard of American hope, and Frank (Leonardo DiCaprio) and April Wheeler (Kate Winslet) are a suburban couple who have the freedom to do nothing but tear each other apart. It turns out that there's a gap between the Wheelers' soaring spiritual ambitions and their actual talents and interests. Their dilemma is grounds for pathos, or possibly for satire, but is it grounds for tragedy? The story, sour and relentless, works toward a gruesomely unhappy ending. Winslet plays April as a will-driven hysteric; DiCaprio gets the externals right, but he's a little afraid of revealing the depths of Frank's shallowness. Watching the two go at each other may be cathartic for some, but it shouldn't be confused with movie art. Sam Mendes directed; Justin Haythe adapted Richard Yates's celebrated 1961 novel.—*D.D.* (12/22 & 29/08) (In wide release.)

THE SECRET OF THE GRAIN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (IFC Center.)

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
An eighteen-year-old Muslim tea-boy named Jamal (Dev Patel), born and raised in the poverty of Mumbai, teeters on the verge of fame and fortune. A nation awaits. Such is the old-fashioned, sentimental cliffhanger to which the screenwriter Simon Beaufoy and the director Danny Boyle have, with unembarrassed drive, committed themselves. Jamal is a contestant on the Indian edition of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?," and the suspicion of the police—who, in an ill-judged prelude to the story, hold and torture him—is that he must have cheated. His response is that experience alone, whether wretched or comic, has by chance furnished him with the correct answers, and the bulk of the film, constructed from flashbacks, proves his point. The style, seen previously in "City of God" and other movies, is what

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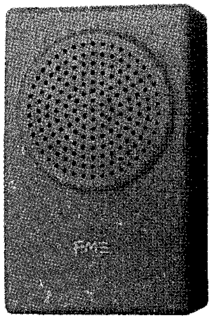

The electronic musicians Christiaan Virant and Zhang Jian live in Beijing and work under the name FM3. In 2005, they released their Buddha Machine, a collection of nine audio loops ranging in length from five to forty seconds and housed in a small brightly colored plastic box fitted with a speaker, like a transistor radio from the last century. Until a new sound is selected, a loop repeats infinitely (or until the battery runs out). You can (and should) listen while you read, relax, exercise, or cook: my original blue Buddha Machine has kept me sane through many an evening of chopping and dicing. Virant and Zhang perform live with multiple Buddha Machines, sometimes battling. They have also designed custom housings, one made partly from tea leaves. The Buddha Machine 2.0 is out now for around twenty bucks, featuring nine new loops and a pitch control. You can also download both sets of loops from the FM3 Web site, buy a Buddha Machine app for your iPhone ($3.99), or go to a Web site called Zendesk that has arrayed twenty-one virtual Buddha Machines into a wall of sound.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

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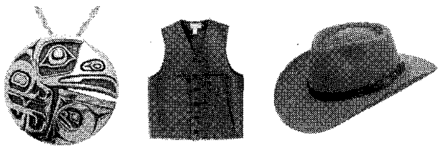

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you might call urban-manic: heated performances, even hotter colors, and camerawork that vies with the editing for nerve and speed. The lad at the center of it all is actually on the dull side, but the energy around him—not least in the dance sequence over the final credits—is difficult to resist.—*A.L.* (11/24/08) (In wide release.)

TWILIGHT

Isabella Swan (Kristen Stewart), a lovely, slender, self-possessed high-school junior, moves to a new school in rainy Washington State and sees a tall, inordinately pale boy, Edward Cullen (the square-jawed Robert Pattinson), glowering at her in despair. He wants her, but he cannot give way to desire. Edward, it turns out, is a vampire, but a very moral one, thirsty yet ascetic; he will drink only animal blood, he tells her, and she falls completely in love with him. In some ways, the scrupulous young man is an ideal lover: after all, many teen-age girls don't want intercourse; they want romance, and here is a boy with superhuman powers who is nevertheless sweet to his girl and protects her from harm without demanding anything in return but the chance to adore her. The director, Catherine Hardwicke ("Thirteen"), oversees some special effects that look a little cheesy, though the sunless Northwest, thick with mountain forests, is gloomily magnificent. Much of the time, Hardwicke keeps the camera close to the chaste lovers. For teens, it's blissful madness—an abstinence fable that's sexier than sex.—*D.D.* (12/1/08) (In wide release.)

VALKYRIE

The new Bryan Singer film marks his reunion with the screenwriter Christopher McQuarrie, with whom he worked on "The Usual Suspects." No suspect is more usual than Adolf Hitler, but this is the first time that Hollywood has taken on the assassination plot that was mounted against him in 1944. Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg (Tom Cruise), newly mutilated in the North African campaign, returns to Berlin and finds common cause with other disenchanted Nazis. Granted personal access to the Führer (David Bamber), he succeeds in planting a bomb, but it fails to eliminate the target; instead, it is the plotters who die. The mechanics of the attempt itself are staged with brio and cunning, each minor hindrance acquiring a tint of black comedy; but the first hour of the film, in which the plan is hatched and bickered over, feels sown with confusion. What finally sinks the film, however, is the treatment of the supporting characters, who seem not only thin in conception (Singer, McQuarrie, and the co-writer Nathan Alexander elided the list of real conspirators, yet there are still too many taken on board here) but also dangerously overplayed. Normally reliable performers like Bill Nighy and Tom Wilkinson look ill at ease in their uniforms, which may be a point in their moral favor but augurs badly for the confidence of the movie. Also with Kenneth Branagh and, as the least plausible German general in the history of warfare, Eddie Izzard.—*A.L.* (1/5/08) (In wide release.)

WALTZ WITH BASHIR

A documentary cartoon may sound like an oxymoron (is it not the duty of animation to elasticate reality?), and Ari Folman's film is indeed impossible to classify. Buried within it is the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps of West Beirut, in 1982, but much of the movie is composed of dreams and distant recollections, as Folman—who was serving in the Israel Defense Forces at the time—questions his former colleagues and slowly feels his way toward the horror. There are passages of unexpected lyricism, including the Fellini-like vision of a giant waterborne nude, as well as a very funny pastiche of no-budget German pornography, but the harsh editing and the gloomy hues leave you in no doubt as to the sombre purpose of Folman's quest. Whether that justifies the last-minute switch of direction, in which he reverts to actual news footage of the slaughter, is open to debate; the head-on vigor of his animation is already graphic enough. In Hebrew, German, and English.—*A.L.* (1/5/08) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE WRESTLER

A straightforward tale, given tremendous extra punch by its leading man. Mickey Rourke, whose career was long ago laid to rest, rises again to play Randy (the Ram) Robinson, a wrestler whose own career has tumbled from a high of twenty years before. No one else, it seems fair to say, could have played the part; for one thing, no one but Rourke combines a gently spoken sweetness with so glazed and inflated a physique, together with a willingness to be treated by his peers like a veal chop. The scenes in the ring, in which Randy, despite a heart attack, struggles to prolong the dregs of his appeal, are often hard to take; but even more agonizing are his attempts to forge enduring bonds with his estranged daughter (Evan Rachel Wood) and a tired stripper (Marisa Tomei). The film has a grainy, bloodied sadness that slips at times into the sentimental; but the director, Darren Aronofsky, knows precisely where the heart of the story beats, and that confidence is a refreshing change after the drippy meanderings of his previous film, "The Fountain." There is nothing less mystical, or more moving, than to watch the Ram reduced to serving at a deli counter: a good man at the end of the line.—*A.L.* (12/15/08) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BEDTIME STORIES: In wide release. **GOOD:** Village East Cinemas. **LAST CHANCE HARVEY:** In limited release. **MARLEY AND ME:** In wide release. **SEVEN POUNDS:** In wide release. **THE SPIRIT:** In wide release. **THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers Presents." Jan. 7 at 7: Short-film program. ♦ Jan. 7 at 8:30: "Too Much Sleep" (2001, David Maquiling). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Jan. 8 at 7 and 8:30: "Blood of a Poet" (1930, Jean Cocteau; in French). ♦ Jan. 9 at 7 and 9: "Beauty and the Beast" (1946, Cocteau; in French). ♦ Jan. 9 at 8: Short films by Bruce Conner and Tony Conrad. ♦ Jan. 10 at 5: "Zvenigora" (1928, Alexandr Dovzhenko; silent). ♦ Jan. 10 at 6: Short films by Viking Eggeling and Alberto Cavalcanti. ♦ Jan. 10-11 at 7: Short films by Robert Breer, Program 1. ♦ Jan. 10 at 7:30: "The Pardon's Widow" (1920, Carl Theodor Dreyer; silent). ♦ Jan. 10-11 at 8:30: Short films by Robert Breer, Program 2. ♦ Jan. 11 at 5: "Earth" (1930, Dovzhenko; silent). ♦ Jan. 11 at 6: "Vampyr" (1931, Dreyer; in Danish). ♦ Jan. 11 at 7:30: "Day of Wrath" (1943, Dreyer; in Danish).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Jan. 7-8 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, and 9:50: "Bigger Than Life" (1956, Nicholas Ray). ♦ Jan. 9-22 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Made in U.S.A." (†). The actor László Szabó will introduce the 8:20 screening on Jan. 9.

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Through April 5: "After the Revolution: Cuba on Screen." Jan. 9-11 at 11 A.M.: "The Death of a Bureaucrat" (1966, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea; in Spanish). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Jan. 9-10: "The Holy Mountain" (1973, Alejandro Jodorowsky; in Spanish). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Jan. 13 at 8: "Upstream Battle" (2009, Ben Kempas), introduced by the director.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." Jan. 7-9 at 1:30: "The Hustler" (1961, Robert Rossen). ♦ The films of Douglas Fairbanks. Jan. 7 at 5: "Flirting with Fate" (1916, W. Christy Cabanne; silent). ♦ Jan. 7 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 12:30: "Robin Hood" (1923, Allan Dwan; silent). ♦ Jan. 8 at 7: "In Again, Out Again" (1917, John Emerson; silent). ♦ Jan. 9 at 4:30 and Jan. 10 at 6:30: "The Taming of the Shrew" (1929, Sam Taylor). ♦ Jan. 9 at 8:30 and Jan. 12 at 6: "The Iron Mask" (†). ♦ Jan. 10 at 3:15: "The Thief of Bagdad" (1924, Raoul Walsh; silent). ♦ Jan. 10 at 8: "The Mystery of the Leaping Fish" (1916, Emerson; silent) and "American

Aristocracy" (1916, Lloyd Ingraham). ♦ Jan. 11 at 1: "The Nut" (1921, Theodore Reed; silent). ♦ Jan. 11 at 5: "The Private Life of Don Juan" (1934, Alexander Korda). ♦ Jan. 12 at 8: "Down to Earth" (1917, Emerson; silent). ♦ "The Contenders." Jan. 7 at 8:30 and Jan. 8 at 8: "Frozen River" (2008, Courtney Hunt). ♦ Jan. 9 at 7:30 and Jan. 10 at 7: "My Winnipeg" (2008, Guy Maddin). ♦ Jan. 11 at 3 and Jan. 12 at 6: "Trouble the Water" (2008, Tia Lessin and Carl Deal).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Jan. 9 at 9:30: "Duck Soup" (1933, Leo McCarey), introduced by Andrew Sean Greer.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—"Dance on Camera." (Also see Dance listings.) Jan. 7 at 6:15 and Jan. 8 at 1:30: "Ballerina" (2007, Bertrand Normand) and "Play: On the Beach with the Ballets Russes" (2008, Gillian Lacey). ♦ Jan. 7 at 9: "EMPAC Dance Movies," a program including "Nora" (2008, Alla Kovgan and David Hinton). ♦ Jan. 8 at 4: "Jirí Kylián on Screen," a short-film program. ♦ Jan. 8 at 6:15 and Jan. 9 at 2: "Flamenco + Shorts," a program including "Antonio Gades: The Ethics of Dancing" (2007, Juan Cano Arecha). ♦ Jan. 8 at 8:45: "Magnetic Cinema" (2008, Pierre Coulibeuf) and two short films. ♦ Jan. 9 at 4: "Dance of the Enchantress" (2007, Adoor Gopalakrishnan). ♦ Jan. 9 at 6:15: "On the Short Side," a short-film program including "Manuelle Labor" (2007, Marie Losier). ♦ Jan. 9 at 8:30: "VSPRS Show and Tell" (2006, Sophie Fiennes), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Jan. 10 at 3: "Under the Influence of Busby Berkeley," a lecture by the choreographer and filmmaker Kriota Willberg. ♦ Jan. 10 at 4: "Dames" (†) and short films by Ondrej Rudavsky, introduced by the critic J. Hoberman. ♦ Jan. 10 at 6:30: "The Gang's All Here" (1943, Berkeley). ♦ Jan. 10 at 8:45 and Jan. 11 at 4:15: "História" (2007, Karsten Liske) and "Nora" (2008, Kovgan and Hinton). ♦ Jan. 11 at 2: "The Blue Bird" (1918, Maurice Tourneur; silent).

READINGS AND TALKS

THE HAPPY ENDING SERIES @ JOE'S PUB
For years, the Happy Ending Music and Reading Series, which mandates that writers and musicians "take one public risk" (such as revealing their PIN numbers or playing a tricky cover song), took place at a bar in Chinatown. It is moving to Joe's Pub (hence the slightly new name) but keeping the same approach. The novelist Richard Price and the guitarist Matthew Caws, of Nada Surf, are the performers. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Jan. 7 at 7.)

MCNALLY JACKSON BOOKS
The poets Jeffrey Yang and Fanny Howe read from their work. (52 Prince St. No tickets necessary. Jan. 7 at 7.)

BARNES & NOBLE
Azar Nafisi, the author of "Reading Lolita in Tehran," offers selections from her memoir, "Things I've Been Silent About." (Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary. Jan. 7 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"THE TOUGHEST SPORT ON DIRT"
Forty-five professional bull riders compete in an invitational tournament at Madison Square Garden. Seven hundred tons of dirt will cover the floor for the occasion. (800-745-3000. Jan. 9-11.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
"Outsider artists," who tend to be self-taught, keep their distance from the mainstream for myriad reasons: they might be rural folk artists, social malcontents, autistic savants, seers, or "normal" office workers who have a secret hobby of creating giant structures out of string. At the annual **Outsider Art Fair** (Jan. 9-11), visitors have the opportunity not only to delve into surprising aesthetic visions but also to enter the very personal, often bewildering worlds of artists such as Martín Ramírez, a Mexican who spent most of his adult years in mental hospitals and created intricate multilayered designs filled with Mexican imagery, or Janet Sobel, a Brighton Beach housewife who began creating vast drip paintings years ahead of Jackson Pollock. (7W New York, 7 W. 34th St. 212-777-5218.) ♦ **Christie's** rings in the new auction season with an "open house" sale (Jan. 12), a mix of moderately priced paintings (mostly modern and contemporary works), prints, works on paper, photographs, and sculptures, led by a red composition in oil from 1954 by Roy Lichtenstein ("Device with Crank"). *It is followed by two days* of even more reasonably priced furnishings and decorations at the first "Interiors" sale of the year (Jan. 13-14). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

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DANIEL HERTZBERG

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
DUBYA DOUBLE
Jan. 20

Will Ferrell opens his new one-man comedy show, "You're Welcome, America. A Final Night with George W. Bush," at the Cort. Adam McKay, Ferrell's collaborator on such movies as "Anchorman" and "Talladega Nights," directs. (212-239-6200.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
UNITED WE STAND
Jan. 22-March 21

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, at Lincoln Center, marks the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth with a program of readings and other events. The tribute gets under way with a night devoted to the Lincoln-Douglas debates, featuring the actors Dana Ivey and James Rebhorn. (212-642-0142.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MAGYAR MADNESS
Jan. 27-Feb. 1

Carnegie Hall's next festival, which is devoted to Hungarian music, begins with a concert by the violinist Roby Lakatos, the uncontested king of Gypsy music, and ends with a performance by another icon, the composer and pianist György Kurtág. (212-247-7800.)

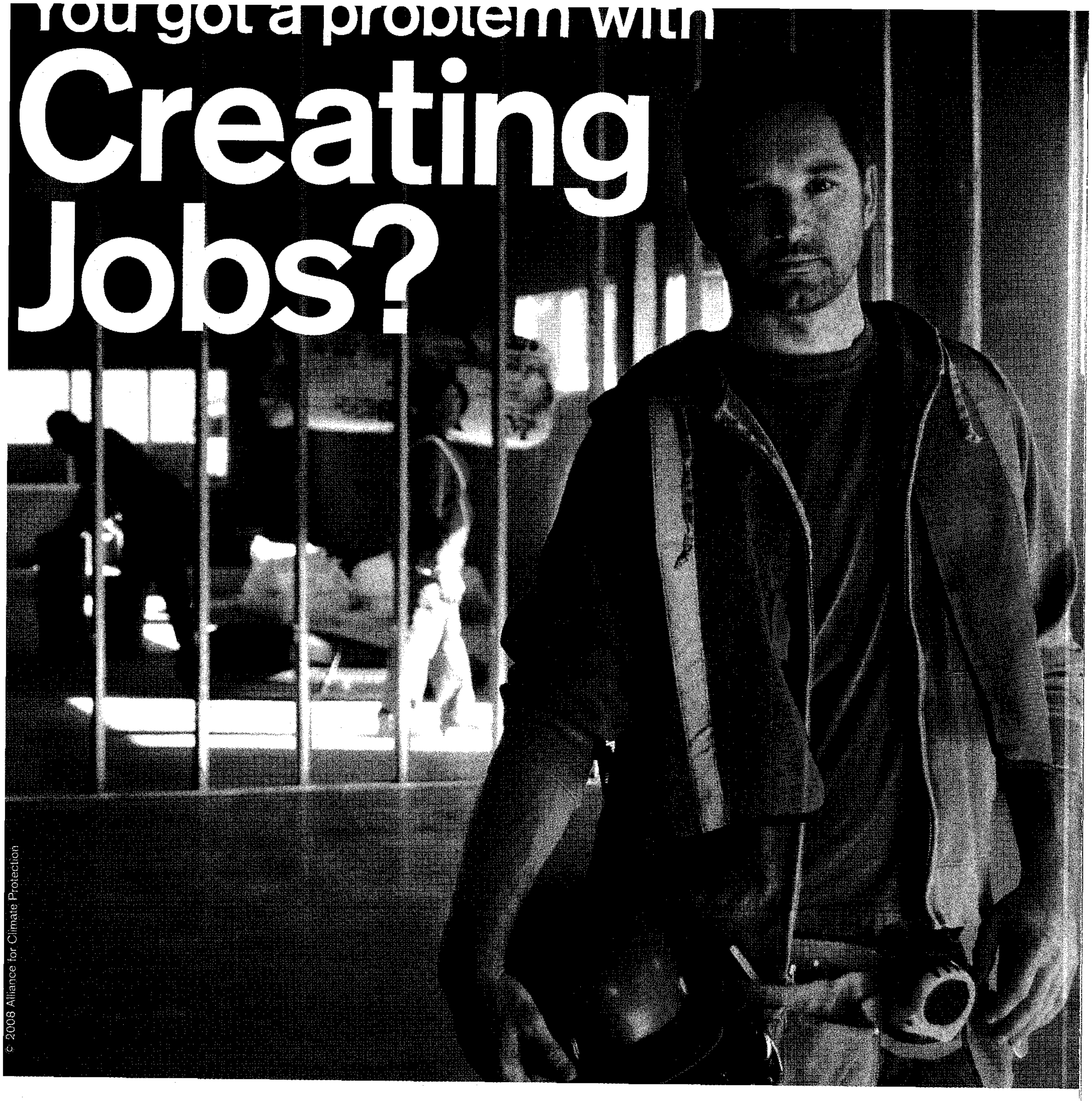
MOVIES
HANKIE-PANKY
Jan. 28-Feb. 1

The king of romantic melodrama, Douglas Sirk, adapted three of his fifties classics from movies directed two decades earlier by John Stahl. Anthology Film Archives presents the originals and the remakes of "Magnificent Obsession" and "Imitation of Life," as well as Stahl's "When Tomorrow Comes" and Sirk's version, "Interlude." (212-505-5181.)

ART
CENTRAL CASTING
Feb. 24-May 24

Until the fifteenth century, bronze was more often cast for utility than for art, but refinements in Florentine foundries changed that. Sculptors in France built on these achievements and created the monuments associated with the glory days of Versailles. Some hundred and twenty-five examples will be installed at the Met in "Cast in Bronze: French Sculpture from Renaissance to Revolution." (212-535-7710.)

French bronze sculpture, at the Met.


You got a problem with
Creating
Jobs?

© 2008 Alliance for Climate Protection

If we made old energy-guzzling buildings use less energy, we could save money and help Repower America. We're not talking about people turning down thermostats and putting on sweaters. Improving energy efficiency is one of the fastest ways to cut our dependence on old, dirty fuels that are killing our planet. It's a great idea, unless you've got a problem with creating jobs.

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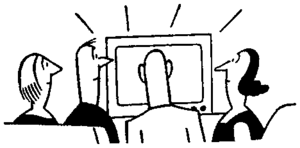
100% clean electricity within 10 years

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
HOMELANDS

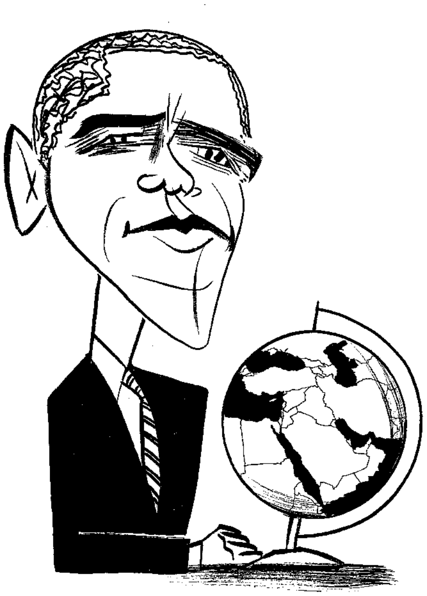


Slaves—men of West African origin branded with Christian monikers like Tom, Peter, Ben, Harry, and Daniel—helped build the White House. Three were on loan from its chief architect, James Hoban. Construction began in 1792, and slaves worked as sawyers, quarrymen, carpenters, stonemasons, brickmakers. Such was the fabric of the new republic: twelve American Presidents owned slaves, eight of them while in office.

After emancipation and the Civil War, a handful of black men won seats in Congress, but, as the spirit of Jim Crow overwhelmed the promise of Reconstruction, white supremacy regained its hold. On January 29, 1901, the last of those black congressmen, George H. White, of North Carolina, stood in the well of the House and prophesied the miracle of reconciliation and justice:

> This, Mr. Chairman, is perhaps the Negroes' temporary farewell to the American Congress but let me say Phoenix-like he will rise up some day and come again. These parting words are on behalf of an outraged, heart-broken, bruised and bleeding, but God-fearing people. . . . The only apology I have for the earnestness with which I have spoken is that I am pleading for the life, the liberty, the future happiness, and manhood suffrage for one-eighth of the entire population of the United States.

On January 20th, an African-American family will take occupancy of the White House. The incoming President's father was Kenyan, his mother a Kansan. The future First Lady's great-great-grandfather Jim Robinson worked as a slave on the Friendfield Plantation, in Georgetown, South Carolina, and is thought to be buried there in an unmarked grave. The election of Barack Hussein Obama represents the culmination of the processes predicted by Representative White, forces that accelerated with the rise, in 1955, of the Second Reconstruction—the civil-rights movement—and the election and the appointment thereafter of hundreds of African-Americans to public office. It is cause not for self-congratulation but for celebration nonetheless. There are many things that the Inauguration of Barack Obama will not mean—the complete eradication of racial prejudice; the disappearance of injustices of history still made manifest in the everyday statistics of employment, education, and incarceration—but it can only instill in the American people a sense of possibility and progress.



Barack Obama was not elected the forty-fourth President based on the depth of his legislative achievements or on the length of his public service. John McCain and Hillary Clinton were the "experience" candidates. Rather, Obama projected an inspiring message, a "narrative," of change at a moment when so much in American life—the economy, the environment, national security, health care—is in such parlous condition that, for many voters, political familiarity seemed less a source of solace than a form of despair. During the campaign, Obama embodied novelty and a broader American coalition, and everything we heard about his temperament—as a community organizer in Chicago, as a president of the *Harvard Law Review*, as a legislator, as a campaigner—spoke of someone who, in contrast to the outgoing, faith-based President, possessed a gift for rational judgment and principled compromise.

Now there remains only the occasion of Obama's Inaugural Address before he will put to the test his capacity to recon-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

cile forces and historical actors far beyond his experiences in Cambridge, Hyde Park, Capitol Hill, and Oahu. As if the hydra-headed economic disaster and the heightened tension between nuclear Pakistan and nuclear India were not enough to quicken the pulse, the Bush era is ending, and the Obama era is opening, with yet another conflagration in the most intractable, faith-dazed, and history-inflamed spot on earth. With the end of an uneasy six-month truce, the agents of Hamas immediately began firing rockets, dozens of them a day, into the population centers of southern Israel. As the Palestinian journalist Daoud Kuttab writes in the Washington *Post*, the Hamas leadership had lost much of its support in Gaza and knew that the only way to regain it was to reëstablish itself as "the heroic resister." In return, the Israeli government—now in the run-up to a national election—unleashed its F-16s and helicopter gunships. As in so many instances in the past half century—the Lebanon War of 1982, the "Iron Fist" response to the 1988 intifada, the Lebanon War of 2006—the Israelis have reacted to intolerable acts of terror with a determination to inflict terrible pain, to teach the enemy a lesson. The civilian suffering and deaths are inevitable; the lessons less so.

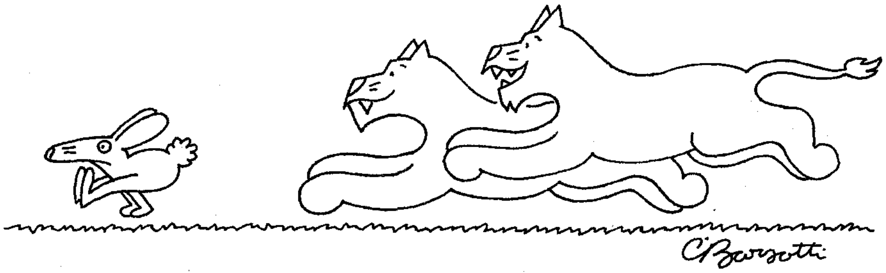
On June 4th, the day after Obama clinched enough delegates to win the Democratic Party's nomination for President, he spoke at a session of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, with the intention of assuring American Jews of his allegiances. Once more, he invoked his own story and told of how, when he was eleven, he first learned about Jewish traditions, history, and the "dreams of a homeland, in the face of impossible odds":

> The story made a powerful impression on me. I had grown up without a sense of roots. My father was black; he was from Kenya, he had left when I was two. My mother was white and she was from Kansas, and I'd moved with her to Indonesia and then back to Hawaii. In many ways, I didn't know where I came from. So I was drawn to the belief that you could sustain a spiritual, emotional, and cultural identity. And I understood the Zionist idea—that there is always a homeland at the center of our story.

As President, Obama will have to address another dream of homeland—the unrealized dream of the Palestinians. In the West Bank, he will be dealing with a leadership that, while imperfect, supports the overdue justice of a two-state resolution. The same is true in Israel, at least with those politicians to the left of Benjamin Netanyahu. But in Gaza Obama will be dealing, directly or not, with political actors who, with Iranian support, seek ceaseless battle with Israel, and may even hope to destabilize Egypt.

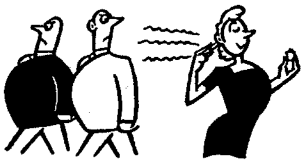
Soon after George W. Bush came to office, eight years ago, he told a confidant that "there's no Nobel Peace Prize to be had" in Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy. He turned his attention instead to places farther east in the Middle East, with mostly horrific results. But, as Obama told his listeners at AIPAC last June, there remains the Talmudic imperative of *tikkun olam,* "the obligation to repair the world." In four years, or eight, he may well have won no Nobel medal, made no final repair. But the obligation of constant engagement is deep; the cost of negligence is paid in blood. And, what is more, history has proved that the seemingly impossible can be achieved: the Irish and the English have all but resolved a conflict that began in the days of Oliver Cromwell, and on January 20th an African-American President will cross the color line and move into the White House—a house that slaves helped build.

—David Remnick



"The system's not perfect, but, by God, it's transparent."

ELIZA DOOLITTLE DEPT.
CORRECTING CAROLINE

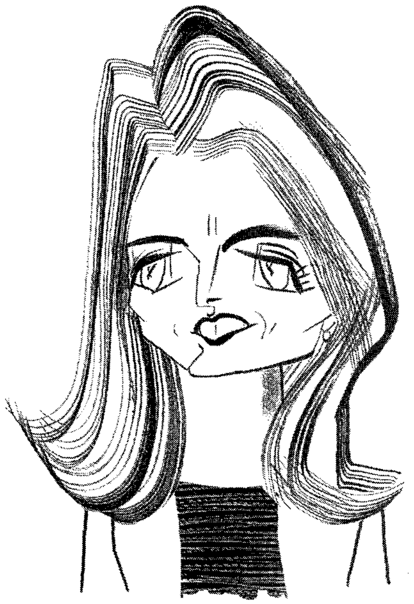


In 2001, shortly after being sworn into the Senate, Hillary Clinton gave a press conference to address questions related to her husband's Presidential pardons. The *Times* observed that she used the word "disappointed" ten times, in reference to her brother, Hugh Rodham, who had accepted four hundred thousand dollars to lobby on behalf of a couple of criminals. (One was pardoned, and the other got out of jail early.) Robin Lakoff, a professor of linguistics at Berkeley, read a partial transcript of Clinton's remarks and was struck by the recurrence of something else: the phrase "you know," which in her line of work is recognized as a "discourse marker" or a "pragmatic particle." She recalled her old graduate student Jan-Ola Östman's 1980 master's thesis, "You Know: A Discourse-Functional Study," and was moved to write an essay, "Now You Know About Hillary Rodham Clinton," in which she speculated that even "very sophisticated and articulate public persons" might repeat the phrase excessively when feeling vulnerable. Lakoff wrote, "Senator Clinton keeps using *you know*, whether hopefully or desperately, as a plea: 'Please see it my way—because we share the same world-view.' "

Clinton's "you know" count came to nineteen. Her possible senatorial replacement, Caroline Kennedy, would seem, by this standard, to be overqualified. She met with a couple of *Times* reporters recently and said "you know" a hundred and thirty-eight times. Speaking to the *News*, and on NY1, she broke two hundred. The effect, however, was not to suggest a shared world view but to recall what some commentators refer to as the "Roger Mudd moment"—a reference to the CBS correspondent who flummoxed Caroline's uncle, Ted Kennedy, in 1979, with questions about his desire to run for President:

Ted: "Well, it's—on what—on, you know, you have to come to grips with the different issues that we're facing. I mean, we can—we'd have to deal with each of the various questions that we're talking about." Caroline, on Ted: "I mean, he loves the Senate. It's been, you know, the most, you know, rewarding life for him, you know. I'm sure he would love it to feel like somebody that he cared about had that same kind of opportunity."

Mudd, last week, reflected, "All Kennedys have always been hard interviews," and added, "At least she didn't use the word 'like,' did she?" (She did, but not nearly so noticeably.)



Caroline Kennedy

The Mudd parallel highlighted the strange tension in Kennedy's nascent candidacy. On the one hand, her lack of polish, or media training, suggests an Everywoman appeal—the mother of three with no Washington experience, like a Sarah Palin for Democrats—while at the same time undermining the Kennedy mystique and serving as a reminder of the Bush lesson that dynasties can devolve (and not just into mangled English).

Perhaps Mary Mayotte could help? Mayotte runs the Speech Fitness Institute and has experience in curbing the tics of fashion-industry types. ("I've seen people say 'fabulous' twenty-five times in a three-minute interview," she said.) She watched Caroline host the Kennedy Center Honors, and identified what she called "eye contact issues: when she looked up from her script, she didn't focus on the audience." One helpful technique, Mayotte suggests, "involves making a conscious effort to CONNECT on opening—in any form of Comm-YOU-nication."

Or maybe Kennedy could call Michael Levine, a publicist who specializes in celebrity overexposure. Levine met Kennedy at a book-signing, and remembers that she had "a warmth that would make a Frigidaire proud." He said his advice to Kennedy is much like his advice to Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan: "Here's what you do—exactly the opposite of what you normally do." For celebs, that means not playing to the paparazzi, and going "bling-less"; for Kennedy, he recommends not public speaking but a "listening tour," to capitalize on the strengths of her underexposure.

There is also the cosmetic approach to achieving public polish. Amy Strozzi, who was hired to serve as one of Sarah Palin's stylists, just began writing a blog, the Beauty Manifesto. Her first post included this "Tip from the Trail": "For a full day of wear, cover your (entire) lip with L'Oreal Automatic Lip Pencil in Nudes, soften with a brush or smudge it with your finger, and add a thin coat of Carmex. Top with a swipe of Chanel Glossimer in Giggle, and you are good to go."

—*Ben McGrath*

SELL-OFF
FAMILY JEWELS

Last week, with family vacations to St. Bart's and Aspen cancelled, the Upper East Side was swarming with kids. The McDonald's at Eighty-fifth and Third was packed—and, to most of the younger patrons, if not the sunken-eyed parents, an afternoon there was probably just as good as skiing. (The Web site destroydebt.com had posted a list of "20 Inexpensive Ways to Entertain Your Kids in the Winter." No. 15: "Count and roll the change.")

At The Breakers, in Palm Beach, the ten-thousand-dollar-a-week cabanas were all booked, but a guest there said the atmosphere was grim. "It's like everybody's in mourning," he said, referring both to Bernie Madoff's victims and to the people whose stock portfolios had merely taken a dive. "It's like a member of the family has died, and its name is Money." A new poolside pastime had emerged, in place of canasta: calling a friend over and showing him a stack of account statements from Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities—the now worthless things touting those steady ten- to fifteen-per-cent returns—and asking, "What did I miss?" The guest, having seen a few, thought he'd detected a clue (besides the impossible math): "When you get a statement from J. P. Morgan and Merrill Lynch, it's done on a laser printer. Madoff's statements were all done on nineteen-nineties printers—impact printers, typewriter-ribbon printers. If I was running a con, I would have kept my technology up to date is what I'm saying."

Back in midtown, business was brisk at the Madison Avenue headquarters of CIRCA, a jewelry-buying firm, where Madoff-related jewels had been incoming all month, like expensive shrapnel. "When Madoff hit, then we started to get the calls," the firm's C.E.O., Chris Del Gatto, said the other day in his office, which is decorated with polo paraphernalia. An older woman in Beverly Hills had mailed in a nine-carat diamond to sell, so that she could pay her expenses; the company had sent armored cars to retrieve two batches of family jewels from Chicago and Arizona. "If it's high enough value, one of the services we provide is we'll send Brinks," Del Gatto said.

He got on his speakerphone and called Tracy Sherman, the company's Palm Beach director, who talked about the daily rounds she'd been making to the homes of Madoff victims. "Just visualize a dining-room table with everything laid out in rows," Sherman said. "They've taken the jewelry out of the safety-deposit box and laid it out—all the earrings, and then come the bracelets and the suites of things that go together." Often, the house is for sale, too. "Everybody down here has David Webb jewelry," Sherman said, referring to a company known for its gem-encrusted animals. "And there's all the inherited jewelry: things from the twenties that are from the great-grandmother. And then the grandmother's things are from the forties and fifties, and now Mom is selling her things that are from the seventies." Sherman helps them prioritize: "I always say, 'Well, now, have you worn any of it? Or is there anything you're still emotionally tied to?' " She does a bit of therapy: "Most of them never thought about having to come up with money to pay regular expenses. I look upon it positively and say, 'Be glad you had these things, and be glad you had great taste, so now you can sell it in order to continue.' "

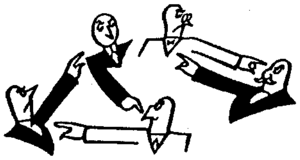
"We become the priest and the rabbi, the psychiatrist," Del Gatto added.

Del Gatto went into a back room and retrieved a manila envelope, which he emptied out onto a table: the day's harvest from Palm Beach, more than a quarter of a million dollars' worth of jewels. There was a worn leather case containing a teardrop-shaped platinum-and-diamond pin made by Cartier in the twenties ($50,000); a diamond tennis bracelet from the seventies ($5,000); a yellow-gold Franck Mueller watch, worth thirty thousand dollars; and a sixties- or seventies-era gold bangle with two green enamel bullfrogs on the ends and matching frog earrings. The frogs had ruby eyes and diamond warts. "This is kind of interesting," Del Gatto said. "This is a David Webb animal suite." The set was worth fifteen thousand dollars.

Del Gatto gestured toward the haul and said, "This will be sold to collectors all around the world," and it was possible to imagine the frog family, together with the rest of the jewels dislodged by Madoff, going on a great migration—from Palm Beach to Russia, or Dubai, or wherever the outlook is still rosy, if such a place exists. He scooped the jewels back into the envelope and walked down the hall to the safe room—a very un-Ali-Baba-like closet full of wiring and plastic boxes. "We're not pirates," he said.

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

BUREAUCRACY DEPT.
TWEED WARS



As anyone who has lived through the past eight years can attest, disputes about the foreign relations of the United States frequently deteriorate into shouting matches. Not so with disputes about the "Foreign Relations of the United States"—the official documentary history of America's dealings with the rest of the world. The series, not so widely known as FRUS, makes public the viscera of officialdom—diplomatic cables, intelligence reports. If you want to read a transcript of President Nixon and Chairman Mao joking about Henry Kissinger, FRUS is the place to look. (Nixon: "Anyone who uses pretty girls as a cover must be the greatest diplomat of all time." Mao: "So your girls are very often made use of?" Nixon: "His girls, not mine.")

But recently FRUS became not just a chronicle of conflict but a source of it. Last month, the State Department's Foggy Bottom headquarters was the site of a contentious meeting, during which two members resigned from an advisory committee of nine historians that oversees the series. The resignations were the culmination of nearly two years of acrimony between the committee and the State Department's Office of the Historian, which is currently headed by Marc Susser. Last fall, the committee learned that one of its members, Tom Schwartz, a historian at Vanderbilt, would not be reappointed by the State Department to another three-year term. Schwartz had been the lead drafter of the committee's 2007 annual report to the Secretary of State and Congress, which noted that the office was having trouble retaining staff historians. A number of staffers had begun to complain about Susser's management style. Some of the gripes sound like generic faculty-room politics: the Historian, the historians groused, played favorites, doling out perks to those who were deferential. As one staff member put it, "It's like junior high. I was going to say high school, but it's more juvenile than that." In a memo to committee members, Craig Daigle, a historian who worked in the office, claimed Susser warned him that if he "committed any mistake, had any problems with security issues, or created any dissension within the office, he would 'cut my fucking heart out.'"

The allegations shocked the chairman of the advisory committee, Wm. Roger Louis, of the University of Texas at Austin. "Even by Texas standards, it was a level of vulgarity and crudeness that we found hard to believe," Louis said. Most troubling to Louis was Susser's apparent intolerance of any dissent. "We began to discover that it is the equivalent of a petty dictatorship in the Historian's Office," he said. The committee, Louis added, felt that "Tom Schwartz was being purged because of the criticism in the report." (A State Department official said that the move was intended to increase the committee's diversity.) So Louis decided to resign at the next scheduled meeting, on December 10th, as did another member, Edward Rhodes.

The fifty or so people in attendance at the meeting weren't sure what to expect. "Usually these meetings are fairly mundane," Tom Zeiler, a committee member, said. "People fall asleep sometimes." This time, the mood was tense. One factor was the unusual presence of Assistant Secretary of State Sean McCormack, the State Department spokesman who heads the Bureau of Public Affairs and to whom Susser ultimately reports.

All eyes were on Louis as he called the meeting to order. Before announcing his resignation, Louis read into the record a letter that he had sent to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. (The day before, Louis's assistant says, someone in Susser's office had called and said that if Louis made the letter public "his career would be over.")

"The prospective fate of the series has now become so grave that it would be a failure of responsibility on my part were I not to call it to your attention," Louis read. He said that he had included with his letter to Rice a compilation of anonymous testimony regarding Susser's management. At this point, McCormack interrupted. "I will not sit here and listen to you traffic in rumors and innuendo!" he shouted. "I hardly think that the kind of ad-hominem attacks you have engaged in are the kind of behavior we expect from respected academics."

Ignoring the outburst, Louis finished reading his letter. Then two committee members read statements from the exiled Tom Schwartz, who suggested that the department look for new members in North Korea, where they might find "the type of subservience and devotion to the Dear Leader that the management of the Historian's Office seems to prefer." (Susser and McCormack declined to comment.)

Two weeks later, Secretary Rice met with the committee and seemed intensely concerned; she has appointed a review panel to look into the matter. But some members view the fracas as a sign of the times. "You're seeing a reflection of the Bush-Cheney Administration," Tom Zeiler said. "You know: you're with us or you're not with us."

—*Justin Vogt*

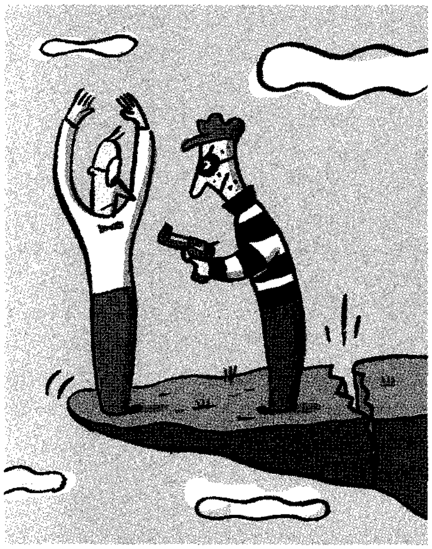
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
CHEAT, PRAY, LOVE

Along with slashed payrolls, rising foreclosures, and plummeting stock prices, 2008 brought another unwelcome development: a surge in bank robberies, which were up more than fifty per cent in New York. This wasn't shocking: we typically expect property crimes to rise in hard economic times. There is, though, one crime against property which bucks this trend: defrauding investors. On Wall Street, fraudulent schemes tend to thrive during economic booms, and to blow up when times turn tough. While bank robbers are getting busier, the Bernard Madoffs are starting to get caught.

Madoff is just the latest in a long line of fraudsters who took advantage of investor euphoria. Time and again, as asset markets have become frothier, fraud has flourished. During England's South Sea Bubble, in 1720, a host of bogus joint-stock companies arose, including one that described its enterprise as "nit-vender," or the selling of nothing. The boom of the nineteen-twenties featured men like Arthur Montgomery, who ran a Ponzi scheme promising investors four-hundred-per-cent returns in sixty days, and the Match King, Ivar Kreuger, who sustained match monopolies all over the world with forged bonds and doctored books. More recently, the stock-market bubble of the late nineties gave rise to enormous frauds at companies like Enron and WorldCom.

Fraud is a boom-time crime because it feeds on the faith of investors, and during bubbles that faith is overflowing. So while robbing a bank seems to be a demand-driven crime, robbing bank shareholders is all about supply. In the classic work on investor hysteria, "Manias, Panics, and Crashes," the economist Charles Kindleberger wrote that during bubbles "the supply of corruption increases . . . much like the supply of credit." This is more than a simple analogy: corruption and credit are stoked by the same forces. Cheap money engenders a surfeit of trust, and vice versa. (The word "credit" comes from the Latin for "believe.") The same overconfidence that leads investors and lenders to underestimate the risks of legitimate investments also leads them to underestimate the likelihood of fraud. In Madoff's case, for instance, his propensity for delivering inexplicably consistent returns month after month should have been a warning sign to his investors. But in the past few years besotted investors were willing to believe lots of foolish things—like the idea that housing prices would just keep going up.

An oversupply of credulity doesn't last, of course; when the crash comes, and people get more cynical and cautious, the frauds are exposed. As Warren Buffett put it, "You only learn who's been swimming naked when the tide goes out." Did the share prices of Enron and WorldCom start plunging after their fraudulent actions came to light? Actually, it was the other way around: the financial mischief was exposed only after their stock prices tanked. In Madoff's case, the steep across-the-board decline in asset prices curbed investors' appetite for risk, so that many started to pull their money out. That effect may very well have forced Madoff to dispense more money than he could keep bringing in, especially since recruiting new investors, which you have to do to keep a Ponzi scheme going, would have become harder after the crash.



When the Madoff scandal erupted, some people argued that investor confidence would be further shaken—that the scandal would make America's markets look more like Russia's, notoriously rife with scams and suspicion. That hasn't happened. After the Madoff story broke, the market jumped almost five per cent, and it's now well above where it was when Madoff was arrested. One reason is that a stock market that lost seven trillion dollars in value in 2008 knows how to take a fifty-billion-dollar loss in stride. And Madoff was running money largely for an élite clientele, which gained access to his services primarily through inside connections, limiting the market-wide impact of his malfeasance.

But the main reason that Madoff didn't destroy investor confidence is that it was already gone, thanks to a year when just about every institution that the market depends on—rating agencies, accounting firms, regulators, Wall Street C.E.O.s.—had messed up. The whole web of intermediaries and knowledge brokers that modern asset markets have come to rely on has become frayed. That helps explain the current credit crunch—bank lending has dropped fifty-five per cent this year—and the dismal state of the stock market. Discovering what the crooks have been up to is disillusioning, but not as disillusioning as coming to terms with what the so-called honest people did.

In David Mamet's movie "House of Games," the grifter played by Joe Mantegna explains to a former mark, "It's called a confidence game. Why? Because you give me your confidence? No. Because I give you mine." So the bankers gave us their confidence, in the form of mortgages and other forms of credit, and we gave them ours. This culture of credulity did plenty of damage to the economy, but now it has given way to something even more corrosive; namely, endemic mistrust. Because if there's one thing worse than too much confidence it's not enough. Fraud impoverishes a few; fear impoverishes the many. As long as mistrust prevails, people will keeping pulling money out of the system—sometimes even at gunpoint.

—*James Surowiecki*

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

GREENING THE GHETTO

Can a remedy serve for both global warming and poverty?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

A few months ago, Van Jones, the founder and president of a group called Green for All, went to visit New Bedford, Massachusetts. His first stop of the day was the public library, where someone had assembled an audience of about thirty high-school dropouts. They leaned back in their chairs, hands in the pockets of their oversized sweatshirts. A few appeared to be stoned.

Jones, who is forty, is tall and imposing, with a shaved head and a patchy goatee. He wears rimless glasses and favors dark clothing. On this particular day, he was wearing a black turtleneck, black jeans, black boots, and a charcoal jacket. He was introduced by a community organizer and aspiring rapper, who described him as "a leader with answers," a "genius from the hood, similar to our own," and a youthful version of Barack Obama. When it was his turn to speak, Jones rejected the lectern that had been set up for him, saying that it reminded him too much of college.

"I love Barack Obama," he said. "I'd pay money just to shine the brother's shoes. But I'll tell you this. Do you hear me? One man is not going to save us. I don't care who that man is. He's not going to save us. And, in fact, if you want to be real about this—can y'all take it? I'm going to be real with y'all. Not only is Barack Obama not going to be able to save you—you are going to have to save Barack Obama."

Jones went on to discuss the crisis on Wall Street, the federal budget deficit—"We're going broke by the second"—and how annoying it can be to listen to people who use a lot of fancy words. "People who know a lot talk weird," he said. "So you can spend a lot of time listening to people who are educated, and all you get is frustrated, because what they're saying doesn't actually land with you. Well, boo-hoo. Get over it."

A hundred and fifty years ago, New Bedford was the whaling capital of the world. "Nowhere in all America will you find more patrician-like houses; parks and gardens more opulent, than in New Bedford," Melville wrote. Today, the town is filled with empty factories. Its long list of problems—failing schools, high unemployment, gang violence—make it just the sort of place Jones likes to work in. The logo of Green for All, which is based in Oakland, California, is a sun rising over a crowded cityscape. The group's goal is to broaden the appeal of the environmental movement and, at the same time, bring jobs to poor neighborhoods. Jones often says that he is trying to "green the ghetto."

In the library, a few of the kids had started to lean forward in their seats. Others had taken their hands out of their pockets. Some were still staring, dazedly, into the middle distance. Jones brought his talk around to the subject of energy.

"I don't want to offend anybody. I might be too radical for you. Are you with me?" he asked.

"Just being real," a young woman called out.

"They can now put up wind turbines—almost like a windmill, but this is not your mama's windmill, it's like a big jet engine sitting up there—and make power," Jones said. "Somebody's going to make a billion dollars deploying that technology. I think it should be you.

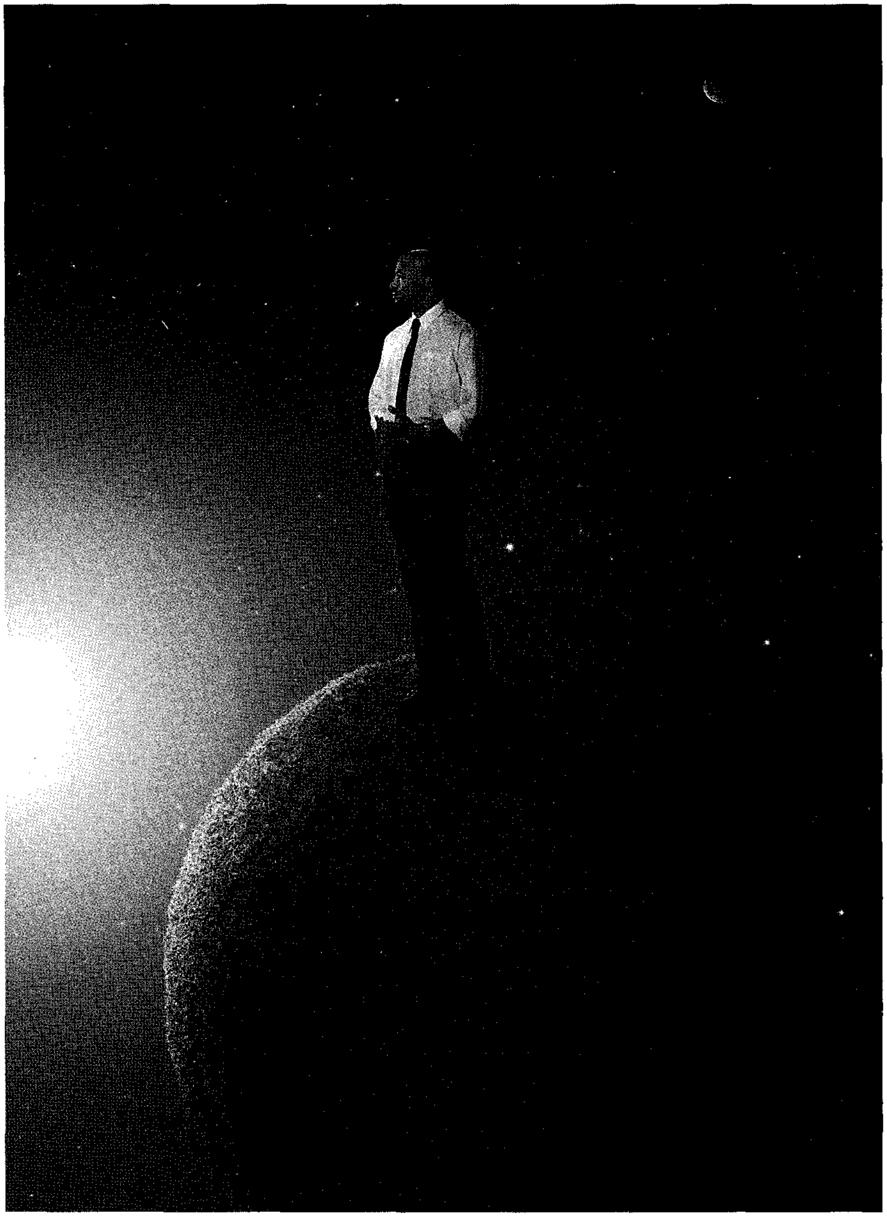
"They have this thing called solar panels," he continued. "A solar panel is a piece of glass almost. Right now wealthy people can put that on their homes. And it costs money to put it up there, but once it's up the sunlight hits it and it turns it into electricity and powers the house. So you're paying electricity bills, but somebody else is kicking it. Somebody's going to make a million dollars figuring out a way to get those solar panels made and deployed in our hoods. I think it should be you."

After he was through, Jones made his

way out into the nearly empty downtown. "That was my street rap," he told me. "You get to hear my élite rap later on."

The modern environmental movement is sometimes said to have begun in the eighteen-nineties, when John Muir founded the Sierra Club, and sometimes in the nineteen-sixties, when Rachel Carson published "Silent Spring." Muir and Carson saw themselves fighting narrow, private interests on behalf of the public in the broadest possible sense—all people, including those who had not been born. But stop by a meeting of any of the major environmental groups, and you will see that the broad American public has yet to join up. Chances are that most of the attendees will be white, and the few who aren't will be affluent and middle-aged. A 2006 study commissioned by Earthjustice, a nonprofit environmental-law group, found that the "ecological base"—defined as Americans who report the environment as being central to their concerns—is "nearly ninety percent white, mostly college-educated, higher-income, and over thirty-five."

"Your goal has to be to get the greenest solutions to the poorest people," Jones told me. "That's the only goal that's morally compelling enough to generate enough energy to pull this transition off. The challenge is making this an everybody movement, so your main icons are Joe Six-Pack—Joe the Plumber—becoming Joe the Solar Guy, or that kid on the street corner putting down his handgun, picking up a caulk gun."


Van Jones: building an "everybody movement." Photograph by Phil Toledano.

After leaving the New Bedford public library, Jones went to talk to Scott Lang, the city's mayor. Lang began the meeting by tossing a few sheets of what looked like plastic on the table. These turned out to be thin-film photovoltaic cells, of the sort that could be sewn into a backpack and used to power a laptop. The Mayor explained that the company that manufactures the cells had recently decided to open a factory in New Bedford, and that the factory could eventually provide a hundred jobs. Jones brightened.

"This could really be something that brings people together, across the lines of class and color," Jones said. He suggested that Lang set up some sort of program to take teen-agers like the ones he had just met and guide them into some of the jobs at the factory. (Many of the teens were working toward high-school-equivalency degrees as part of a program in which they were also supposed to be learning carpentry skills.) Lang, a former prosecutor, said, "Anything we try and do in the city right now is geared toward everyone being involved." But he didn't seem terribly keen on Jones's idea of a program exclusively for teens. Jones pressed him. The teen-agers, he said, "feel not seen. I think they need special encouragement. I would love to see a mayor's initiative to get those young people into this green economy." The Mayor tried to steer the discussion in a new direction. Jones pressed him again.

"I'm willing to meet people halfway or more," Lang finally said. That evening, at another event, Jones ran into the young man who had introduced him at the meeting in the library. Jones told him that the Mayor was interested in working with him. When I mentioned to Jones that this was not my impression of what the Mayor had indicated, he said, "I'm not looking for the points of difference. I'm looking for the points of commonality. I've trained my mind so that people can say twenty-seven things that might be objectionable, but as soon as they say one, that twenty-eighth thing, that's in the right direction, that's where I'm going to go in the conversation. I think that's really important in a country as diverse as ours, to listen. So this guy, he says, I don't want this, I don't want that. But he says, I want everybody to be included. Well, that's all I need. *Dayenu.*"

Van Jones, born Anthony Jones, grew up in Jackson, Tennessee, a small town about ninety miles east of Memphis. His father was a junior-high-school principal and his mother was a high-school teacher. His grandfather was the leader of the Christian Methodist—formerly Colored Methodist—Episcopal Church. As a child, Jones was, by his own description, "bookish and bizarre." When his parents gave him Luke Skywalker and Han Solo action figures, instead of arranging them to fight he would have them run for imaginary public offices. His twin sister, Angela, remembers him as "the stereotypical geek—he just kind of lived up in his head a lot." During the summers, Jones accompanied his grandfather to religious conferences, where he recalls sitting "in these hot, sweaty black churches," listening to the adults talk, all day and into the night.

After high school, Jones enrolled at the University of Tennessee at Martin. The first day of his freshman year, he decided that he needed a new identity, or, at least, a new name. Anthony Jones was dull. He chose Van because, he told me, "it has a little touch of nobility, but at the same time it's not overboard." Jones majored in communications and political science and, thinking that he wanted to become a journalist, interned for a couple of newspapers. The experience convinced him that he was on the wrong career path. In 1990, he enrolled at Yale Law School.

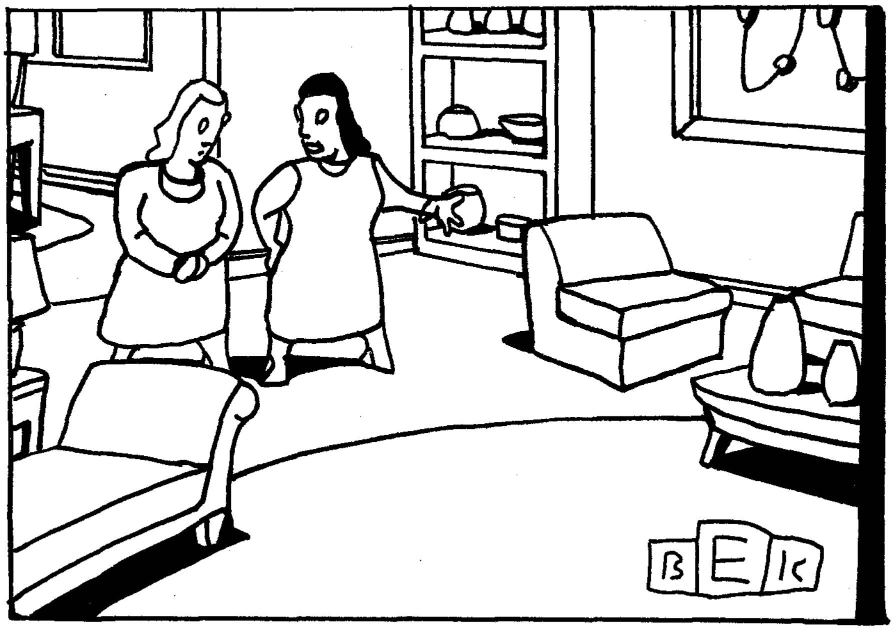
While he was living in New Haven, Jones saw a lot of things that disturbed him. One was the video of the Rodney King beating, which took place during his second semester. Another was crime. "I was seeing kids at Yale do drugs and talk about it openly, and have nothing happen to them or, if anything, get sent to rehab," he said. "And then I was seeing kids three blocks away, in the housing projects, doing the same drugs, in smaller amounts, go to prison." Upon graduating, Jones moved to San Francisco and set up the Bay Area PoliceWatch, a hot line for complaints of police misconduct. It was soon receiving fifteen calls a day.

In 1996, Willie Brown became San Francisco's first African-American mayor. Most of the city's black leaders had spent years working with Brown, and wanted to support him. Jones, as he put it, "didn't know Willie Brown from a can of paint, and didn't care." Sensing an opening for someone "young and entrepreneurial," he founded a civil-rights organization, which he named for Ella Baker, who helped form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

In its early years, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights consisted of a closet-like office and a computer that Jones had brought from his apartment. John Anner, who later became the chairman of the center's board of directors, recalls going to visit the operation one day and discovering that "it was really just Van." The first case the center took up was that of a young black man named Aaron Williams, who had died in police custody. (Williams, a burglary suspect, had been kicked and beaten by a group of cops.) One of the officers involved in the incident had a history of complaints against him. Jones led the fight—eventually successful—to get the officer fired.

Looking back at that time, Jones describes his modus operandi as "traditional activism, the politics of confrontation and outrage. I was proud to be hated by the city fathers on both sides of the Bay." He was constantly seeking an opportunity to hold a news conference or stage a protest, and, more often than not, managed to find one. California has a sprawling—and, by many accounts, inhumane—juvenile-incarceration system; Jones argued that the state should be putting more money into schools and community programs, and less into prisons. His arguments were compelling enough that by 2000 the center was able to hire five more full-time employees.

That year, Jones learned about a plan to construct a five-hundred-and-forty-bed juvenile-detention center some twenty miles east of Oakland, in Dublin. The new center was being billed as a way to improve conditions for youthful offenders; Jones thought that it would simply result in that many more (mostly black) teen-agers being locked up. The official name for the project was the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center. Jones concluded that the way to block the project was to give it a new name. He began to call it a "superjail for kids." The campaign to "Stop the Superjail" soon took off. A meeting of the California Board of Corrections was derailed by several dozen teen-agers who performed raps opposing the project. Another meeting, of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, was disrupted when a group of teens sat down in front of the dais and refused to leave. ("If I hear those kids one more time chanting 'Books not bars,' I'm going to scream," one member of the board complained.)



"We hired all the designers ourselves."

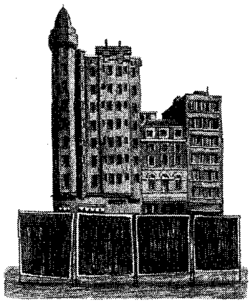
Gavin Newsom was elected mayor of San Francisco in 2003. He remembers meeting with Jones and other community leaders shortly after he took office, to discuss recent incidents of police brutality. Jones left the meeting early, but before doing so he told Newsom off. "I will never forget being infuriated by him—totally outraged—and completely mesmerized," Newsom recalled. "It was quite a performance. Arguably, that's his genius. He's successful at getting into the minds or under the skin—depending on how you want to analyze it—of politicians. And the only way you can do that is there's got to be some truth in the critique."

Around this time, as Jones was winning the "superjail" fight, he began to suffer a crisis of confidence. The crisis was not just professional; some days, he felt barely able to get out of bed. "Nobody does this stuff for pure reasons," he told me. "You may eventually wind up with a more pure outcome, like a Gandhi or a Mandela, but no young radical is running around with pure motives. I certainly wasn't motivated only by love for the people. I was trying to find some kind of community, or some kind of sense of belonging, or some sense of redemption through heroic deeds. I wasn't being honest with myself about it, and it all just proved to be incredibly fragile."

One day, in this bleak mood, Jones learned about an appearance by Julia Butterfly Hill. Hill had spent two years trying to protect a giant redwood tree by living in its branches, and she was going to speak at a San Francisco bookstore. By this point, Jones had been living in the city for almost a decade, but he realized that, except for the places where he had held protests, he didn't know where anything was. He left himself an hour and a half for the trip to the bookstore, which turned out to be a few blocks from his office.

Listening to Hill that evening, Jones found his gloom lifting. "She was just radiant," he recalled. "She talked about seeing all these trees cut down. She talked about the helicopters they put up, trying to blow her out of the tree. She talked about the timber workers whom she befriended from her perch. And how she won. And what was remarkable was there was not a trace of bitterness in her for these people who had destroyed this forest, and whom she had to spend two years of her life—not two weeks, not two days—putting her body on the line to fight.

"It's great to win these things," he went on. "But there was no guarantee she was going to win, day after day. I was always looking for clever things I could game out, and she just stepped out on faith, and did it. And I was, like, This is a remarkable person. I made a commitment in my own mind that I wanted to do my work like she had done her work. Before that, I was, like, Dr. King? Wimp! But I thought, She's right. That's the only thing that's going to work. And I also knew I had no clue how to get there. I didn't have the internal capacity. So she became this possibility out there."



Jones and Hill eventually became friends. "We fit together like pieces of a puzzle," said Hill, who, after saving the tree, founded a nonprofit group called Circle of Life. "I brought the piece that we are not separate from this planet. His piece was we need to uplift everyone. We were committed to seeing how those pieces fit together." First, the two spoke together in private; then they began to appear together publicly. Sometimes, when Hill was invited to lecture at a college campus, she would ask Jones to come along.

"We could see underneath all of it was the idea of disposability," Jones told me. "The idea that you've got disposable people, a disposable planet. We would just kind of go around and talk about this. People would listen and they would come to one conclusion: they must be sleeping together. We weren't, but it was the only thing anybody got out of it. It was very frustrating."

A few months ago, Jones published a book titled "The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems." In it, he argues that the best way to fight both global warming and urban poverty is by creating millions of "green jobs"—weatherizing buildings, installing solar panels, and constructing mass-transit systems. A percentage of these jobs—Jones is purposefully vague about how many—should go to the disadvantaged and the chronically unemployed. "The green economy should not be just about reclaiming thrown-away stuff," he writes. "It should be about reclaiming thrown-away communities." Jones's book was slated to appear in 2009, but during the Presidential campaign, when several of the candidates began talking about "green jobs," he decided to advance the publication. The jacket of "The Green Collar Economy" features endorsements from, among others, the talk-show host Tavis Smiley; House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; the journalist Thomas L. Friedman; and former Vice-President Al Gore.

"I love Van Jones," Gore told me. "I love his work. I love his heart and his commitment and his intellect. I love his mission. He has wisely picked a part of this set of interwoven challenges that should have been addressed much more forcefully by me and others long ago."

"Van is a visionary," Smiley said. "My grandmother had an old saying, 'It's just too much like right.' What Van is saying is just too much like right. It just makes too much sense for us not to do it."

"I think Van Jones is a big part of the future of environmentalism," Gus Speth, the dean of Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and a co-founder of the Natural Resources Defense Council, told me. "He, more than anyone else, is bringing together a concern about the environment and a concern about social justice. And, if I had just one thing to say, it is that we in the environmental movement cannot fail Van Jones."

Jones lives in Oakland with his wife, Jana Carter, an employment lawyer, and their two young sons. About half the time, though, he is on the road, trying to build support for his organization and, more recently, his book. A couple of weeks after the trip to New Bedford, he took the red-eye to Washington, D.C., to speak at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank founded by John Podesta, who heads Obama's transition team. More than a hundred and fifty people—mostly white and middle-aged—had showed up to hear him; the room wasn't big enough, so many had to stand in the hall.

Jones began by talking about the

financial crisis. "The floor has been torn out from under the American people," he said. "That's the bad news. People are losing their jobs, their homes, their pensions, their 401(k)s. But I know from my personal life sometimes something really bad has to happen before something really good can happen. It's when you get dumped or fired or fail that test that you have to look at yourself and figure out, What am I going to do now? And we're at that moment. Sometimes a breakdown can lead to a breakthrough."

When Jones gives a talk, something he does at least two or three times a week, he likes to begin by checking out the crowd; if he can, he will sit in the audience beforehand, absorbing the mood. He spends a lot of time listening to speeches—the way most people download Coltrane or Mozart, he's got Churchill and Martin Luther King on his iPod.

"Ronald Reagan I admire greatly," he once told me. "You look at what he gets away with in a speech—unbelievable. He's able to take fairly complex prose and convey it in such a natural and conversational way that the beauty of the language and the power of the language are there, but you stay comfortable. That's very hard to do."

At the Center for American Progress, Jones offered several proposals for creating green jobs. Most were the sort that have been circulated recently in position papers by liberal groups like CAP (where Jones is a senior fellow) and the Apollo Alliance, a coalition of labor and environmental organizations (where he is a founding board member). One proposal involved a federal revolving-loan program to make buildings more energy efficient.

"You have construction workers who are idle, and they're going to be idle for twelve months, twenty-four months, thirty-six months," he said. "They're not going to be able to build anything. Let them rebuild *everything*. We have people coming home from wars, coming home from prisons, coming out of high school with no job prospects whatsoever. Let us connect the people who most need work with the work that most needs to be done."

Another proposal involved upgrading the nation's electrical grid, to allow power generated, for example, by wind turbines in the Midwest to be transmitted to population centers in the Northeast.

"You say, We can't do it," he observed. "And I'm going to say, *Au contraire, mon frère*, and I'll prove my case. We used to have a country, allegedly, but you couldn't drive across it, because all we had was a bunch of old dirt roads. Somebody, in the name of national security, said, 'Hold on a sec. What if we get invaded on the West Coast, how can we get troops from the East Coast?' So we created an interstate-highway system that connected the country to itself."

He lowered his voice to a grumble: " 'Oh, we can't afford to do it! This is insane!' We couldn't afford *not* to do it. Because the minute you did that the economy went through the roof. It was such a good idea that we did it again. In the name of national security, people in the Pentagon said, 'If we have one big communications tower, and somebody knocks it out, then we're blind, deaf, and dumb. We've got to figure out a way to distribute our information system.' So they came up with the idea of the information superhighway—for you young people, that's what we call the Internet. 'We can't afford to do this!' We couldn't afford *not* to do it. The minute we connected the country to itself, the economy went through the roof. All we're saying is, let's do it again. But this time, instead of connecting the country to itself to move bodies and vehicles or data around, let's connect the country to itself so we can move clean-energy electrons around. Then you've got the strongest economy in the world."

About five years ago, Jones, thinking about the notion of "disposability," proposed that the Ella Baker Center broaden its agenda. His new idea was for a program that he named "Green Jobs, Not Jail." Just about everybody else associated with the center opposed the scheme.

"My concern was that it was something that was just wonderful in a speech, but was it anything we could deliver on?" John Anner, who was then the chairman of the center's board and now heads a foundation that provides aid in Vietnam, told me. "I knew that there was not a soul at the Ella Baker Center that I would trust to build a birdhouse. They were advocates, not implementers. My job was to guard against mission drift: 'Oh, we're a civil-rights organization.' 'Oh, we're an environmental organization.' Well, what's next? Are we going to also explore outer space?"

Jones refused to be dissuaded. He began contacting environmental groups. Most were so eager to shed their all-white image that, knowing next to nothing about him, they invited him to speak to their members and put him on the programs of their conferences. He also began applying for grant money, which he planned to use to bring green jobs to Oakland. In 2004, he persuaded a New York-based philanthropy called the Nathan Cummings Foundation to give him two hundred and fifteen thousand dollars.

"We called all these community meetings, did these retreats, and at the end of the day we had some great photographs, a couple of pamphlets, and not one job," he recalled. "It was a complete and utter failure." Jones went back to the foundation and asked for another two hundred and fifteen thousand dollars, which he got.

"Then we wasted it all again," he said. "Because we still didn't know what we were doing." Gradually, Jones came to see that businesses weren't going to locate in Oakland because some well-meaning nonprofit asked them to. Instead of doing freelance economic-development work, he began to think that he should focus his efforts on public policy.

In February, 2007, Nancy Pelosi, who had recently become Speaker of the House, scheduled a meeting in San Francisco to discuss measures to combat climate change. Jones was one of forty or so people who were invited to attend. A few days before the session, he received an e-mail about the agenda. Everyone, it said, would be given a chance to briefly introduce himself. "It was like capital-letters 'briefly,' bold, italics, underlined—'briefly' introduce yourself," he recalled.

At the meeting, Jones was seated near Pelosi, and he was the first person asked to speak. "My introduction was 'My name is Van Jones. I'm from the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. We work to get kids out of jail and into jobs,' " he said. "I figured, that's pretty good. It would be very hard to get more brief than that. Then the next person says, 'Madame

Speaker,' and I think, I kind of left that part out. That's not so good. He got me. That's probably better. And then he just starts talking and talking. The guy talks for two or three minutes. I'm looking around like, this guy can't read or something. And then the next person talks for five minutes and each person is talking longer and longer, and by the time we get back around the meeting's over." Jones could see that Pelosi had a sheet of paper in front of her with all the attendees' names listed on it. Next to every name except one, she had taken copious notes. Next to his name, the sheet was blank.

"I knew I had to do something to get the room back," Jones told me. Pelosi said that they had to leave for a press conference. Were there any last questions? Jones raised his hand. "I said, 'My question is: Will you say four words at the press conference?' And she just kind of looked at me. So of course at this point everybody in the room started to lean away from me.

"I said, 'If you say these four words, I guarantee you that you'll keep the Democratic majority in the House for the next twenty years. If you say these four words, you'll expand the coalition around global warming in a way that nobody even thinks is possible. If you say these four words, you'll give help and hope to people who haven't had any for a long time.' Finally, she said, 'Well, what are the four words?' I said, 'Clean Energy Jobs Bill.'"

A little while later, at the press conference, Pelosi called Jones up to the microphone. "We'll say it together," she said. "Clean Energy Jobs Bill!"

"You folks drunk enough yet?"

From that point, the Clean Energy Jobs Bill progressed much along the lines of, as Jones put it to me, "an after-school special." Jones had had only a vague idea what the four words meant; Pelosi's interest inspired a rush to get legislation drafted. In June, 2007, a measure authorizing the U.S. Department of Labor to spend a hundred and twenty-five million dollars to train workers for green jobs was introduced in the House. The bill, now called the Green Jobs Act, provided targeted funds for low-income trainees. A few months later, the bill was incorporated into a much larger piece of legislation, the Energy Independence and Security Act, and was approved by Congress and signed into law by President Bush in December, 2007. Around this time, Jones left the Ella Baker Center to found Green for All. The organization now has a staff of twenty-five and an annual budget of four million dollars.

Since Pelosi's meeting, the notion of green jobs has become a commonplace. Not only did it keep coming up in last year's campaign but it has been embraced by a growing number of unions (in December, the Service Employees International Union announced that it was joining a coalition of labor and environmental groups called the Blue Green Alliance), by the heads of many major corporations, and by an ever-expanding list of politicians. Obama has said that as President he wants to generate five million such jobs, and his stimulus package is expected to contain billions of dollars for this purpose.

Still, the mechanics of creating green jobs—or even what jobs should qualify for the title—have yet to be worked out. At the same time that the President-elect has said that he wants to promote "green" economic growth, much—perhaps most—of the stimulus package is likely to be devoted to projects, like highway expansion, that will have precisely the opposite effect. In the days that I followed Jones around, I heard several people who ran training programs in green professions complain that once their students had graduated they couldn't find work. (Jones's response was that they ought to lobby for more federal support.) And though Congress approved the Green Jobs Act, no money for job training has been appropriated.

Meanwhile, the basic premise of Jones's appeal—that combatting global warming is a good way to lift people out of poverty—is very much open to debate. Economists generally agree that the key to addressing climate change is to raise the cost of burning fossil fuels, either directly, through a carbon tax, or indirectly, through a cap-and-trade program. Low-income families are the ones that would be hardest hit by such a cost increase. They could be compensated through some kind of rebate, or a cut in other taxes; it's been proposed, for example, that revenues from a carbon tax could be used to reduce the payroll tax. But it's not at all clear that the number of jobs created by, say, an expanding solar industry would be greater than the number lost through, say, a shrinking coal-mining industry. Nor is it clear that a green economy would be any better at providing work for the chronically unemployed than our present, "gray" economy has been.

When I presented Jones's arguments to Robert Stavins, a professor of business and government at Harvard who studies the economics of environmental regulation, he offered the following analogy: "Let's say I want to have a dinner party. It's important that I cook dinner, and I'd also like to take a shower before the guests arrive. You might think, Well, it would be really efficient for me to cook dinner in the shower. But it turns out that if I try that I'm not going to get very clean and it's not going to be a very good dinner. And that is an illustration of the fact that it is not always best to try to address two challenges with what in the policy world we call a single-policy instrument."

Matthew Kahn, an economics professor at U.C.L.A.'s Institute of the Environment, noted that public-works programs have a history of inefficiency. Why would an environmentally oriented public-works program be any different? "How do we make sure this isn't just a giant green boondoggle?" he asked.

Jones's response to such critiques is, in effect, to do them one better. Yes, it may be difficult to address climate change and poverty at the same time, he says, but it's even harder to do so separately. "You've got to have a holistic, integrated set of solutions or you're going to wind up with half your energy being used up to fight 'Drill, baby, drill!' " he told me. "People say, 'Oh, we'll take a shortcut.' Well, those shortcuts are a lot longer than they look."

"I know as much as anybody what a long walk this is," he said at another point. "We have a long way to go. You can pass all the bills you want to; you can appropriate all the bills you want to. You can even start retrofitting buildings. But if I go there and the people who are doing the retrofits are just the people who used to have jobs anyway, and they're mostly all one color and mostly all one kind of people, then I'm not going to be satisfied. So I'm going to be the last person in America who's happy. Everybody's going to win before I do."

The day after Jones appeared at the Center for American Progress, he flew to Boston for a conference known as Greenbuild. On the way, he stopped at Boston's city hall for a meeting with Mayor Thomas Menino, and then at a job-training agency that was offering a fourteen-week course in hazardous-waste remediation. Several students in the course had copies of Jones's book open in front of them; one, I noticed, had highlighted practically every passage in bright yellow. The student, Luis Santos, told me that he had done time, and was looking for a career that would allow him to make a positive contribution. "This man is great," he said of Jones.

"Van is the Martin Luther King of the green-jobs movement," the agency's executive director, Gary Kaplan, said. "You need a leader who convinces people we've just got to do this, because there are always going to be a lot of obstacles."

By the time Jones got to Greenbuild, at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, it was lunchtime. Crowds of people were milling around the cavernous exhibition hall, eating sandwiches and peering at displays of water-saving toilets, recyclable carpets, soybean-based insulation, low-energy lighting, and counters made of reused concrete. Greenbuild, which is held every year in a different city, is part trade show, part educational seminar; the program included sessions on straw-bale design, building-integrated wind turbines, and "high-performance renovations." Jones was ushered into a meeting room where nearly a thousand people—architects, engineers, construction managers, city planners—had gathered to hear him.

Jones started out by speaking about the election—"It's not that we have a President who's black; it's that for the first time we have a President who's green"—and soon moved on to the idea of a revolving-loan fund to retrofit buildings.

"It may be very hard for many of you to build all the things you want to," he said. "We may not be able to build anything, but we can rebuild everything. And you have knowledge. You have the wisdom to take the biggest bite out of carbon and to fuel the job creation that we need."

He went on, "If we come together and get this done, we will have achieved something quite extraordinary. We will have achieved something greater than Barack Obama has. What gave him the audacity of hope? You did. Even when the government wasn't interested in green buildings, even when your local city council didn't know what you were talking about, you had the audacity to keep pushing anyway, to keep raising standards anyway, to keep trying to make a difference anyway. He saw that audacity in *you.*"

After the speech, the audience rose to its feet, clapping. As Jones left the hall, dozens of people trailed after him, all wanting to talk. ♦

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BY BRUCE McCALL

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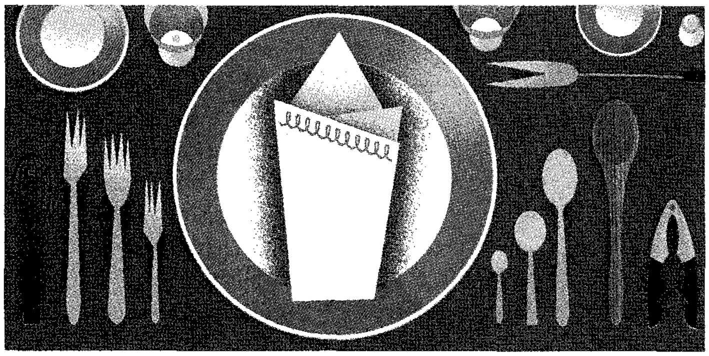

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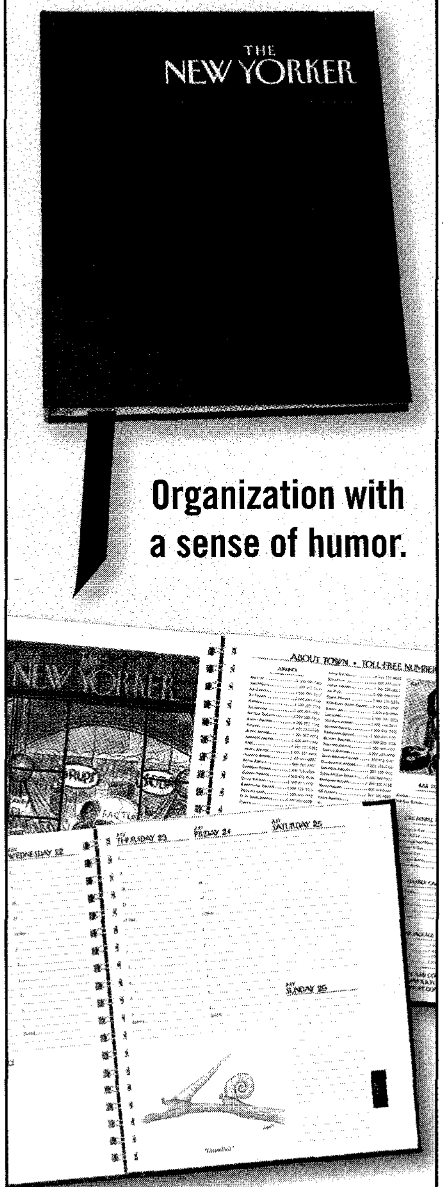

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LETTER FROM CHINA

STRANGE STONES

Two Midwestern refugees on the road to the Tibetan Plateau.

BY PETER HESSLER

All along Highway 110 we saw signs for Strange Stones. They first appeared in Hebei Province, where the landscape was desolate and the only color came from the advertising banners posted beside the road. They were red and had big characters promising Qi Shi—literally, "strange stones"—and had been tattered and torn by the wind. We were driving northwest, right into a spring storm. There was only rain at the moment, but we could see what lay ahead—the forecast was frozen on top of the oncoming traffic. Most vehicles were big Liberation-brand trucks carrying freight south from Inner Mongolia, and their stacks of boxes and crates were covered with ice. The trucks had fought a crosswind on the steppes, and now their frozen loads listed to their right, like ships on a rough sea.

It was 2002, I was driving a rented Jeep Cherokee, and Mike Goettig was along for the ride. If things went well, we might eventually make it to the Tibetan Plateau. We had met in the Peace Corps years earlier, and after finishing our time as volunteers we had each found a different way of staying in China: I worked as a freelance writer; Goettig opened a bar in the southwest. But every once in a while we met up on the road, for old times' sake. We passed a half-dozen signs for Strange Stones before either of us spoke.

"What's up with this?" Goettig said at last.

"I have no idea. I haven't driven this road before."

The banners stood in front of small shops made of concrete and white tile, and they seemed to grow more insistent with every mile. Strange Stones is the Chinese term for any rock whose shape looks like something else. It's an obsession at scenic destinations across the country; in the Yellow Mountains you can seek out natural rock formations with names like Immortal Playing Chess and Rhinoceros Watching Moon. Collectors buy smaller rocks; sometimes they've been carved into a certain shape, or they may contain a mineral pattern with an uncannily familiar form. I didn't have the slightest interest in Strange Stones, but their proliferation in this forgotten corner of Hebei mystified me. Who was buying this stuff? Finally, after about twenty banners, I pulled over.

Inside the shop, the arrangement seemed odd. Display tables completely encircled the room, leaving only a narrow gap for entry. A shopkeeper stood beside the gap, smiling. With Goettig behind me, I squeezed past the tables, and then I heard a tremendous crash.

I spun around. Goettig stood frozen; shards of green lay strewn across the concrete floor. "What happened?" I asked.

"He knocked it off!" the shopkeeper said. He grabbed the hem of Goettig's coat. "Your jacket brushed it."

Goettig and I stared at the scattered shards. Finally, I asked, "What is it?"

"It's jade," the man said. "It's a jade ship."

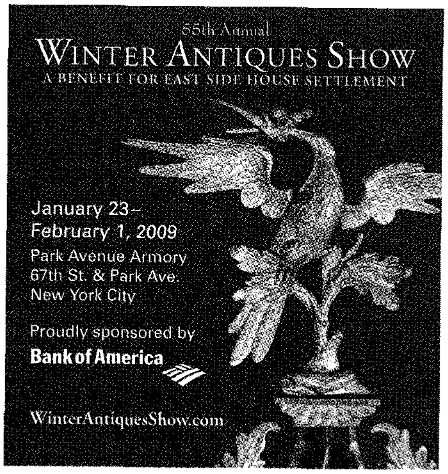
Now I recognized pieces: a corner of a smashed sail, a strand of broken rigging. It was the kind of model ship that Chinese businessmen display in their offices for good luck. The material looked like the cheap artificial jade that comes out of factories, and the ship had exploded—there were more than fifty pieces.

"Don't worry about it," the shopkeeper said brightly. "Go ahead and look around. Maybe there's something else you'll want to buy."

We stood in the center of the room, surrounded by the ring of tables, like animals in a pen. Goettig's hands were shaking; I could feel the blood pulsing in my temples. "Did you really knock it over?" I said, in English.

"I don't know," he said. "I didn't feel anything, but I'm not sure. It fell down behind me."

I had never seen a Chinese entrepre-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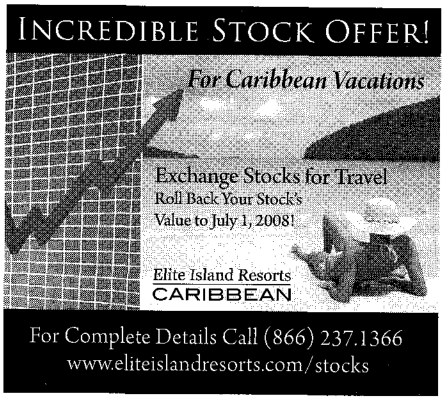
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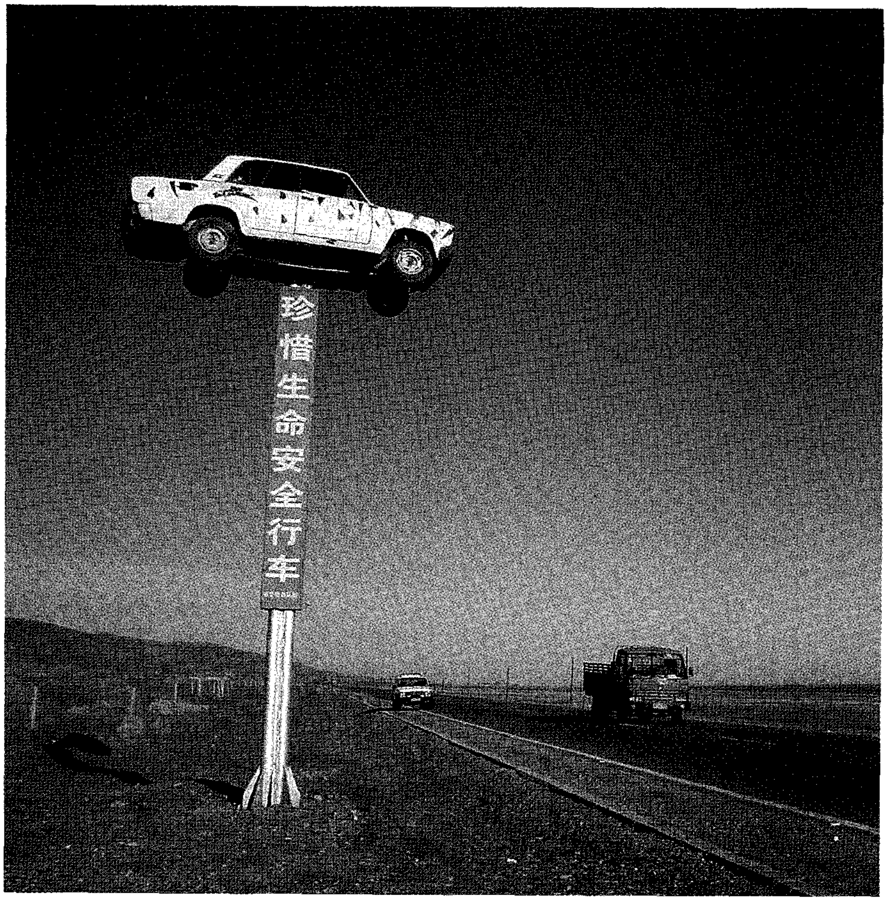
neur react so calmly when goods were broken. A second man emerged from a side room, carrying a broom. He swept the shipwreck into a neat pile, but he left it there on the floor. Silently, other men appeared, until three more of them stood near the door. I was almost certain it was a setup; I had heard about antique shops where owners broke a vase and blamed a customer. But we were hours from Beijing, and I didn't even know the name of this county. Goettig had become extremely quiet—he was always like that when things went wrong. Neither of us could think of a better plan, so we started shopping for Strange Stones.



The government perched cars on tall poles as highway-safety propaganda.

PETER HESSLER

Goettig and I had both joined the Peace Corps in 1996, when it seemed slightly anachronistic to become a volunteer. President John F. Kennedy had founded the organization in 1961, at the height of the Cold War, and back then it was immensely popular, attracting idealistic young people who were concerned about America's role in the developing world. Later, after the Vietnam War, the Peace Corps suffered as the nation experienced a wave of cynicism about foreign policy. Since the attacks of September 11th, the significance of the Peace Corps has changed again—nowadays anybody who joins is likely to have thought hard about personal responsibility in time of war.

During the mid-nineties, though, there were no major national events that weighed on volunteers. It was hard to say what motivated a person to spend two years abroad, and we went for countless reasons. Most of the volunteers I knew possessed some strain of idealism, but usually it was understated, and often people felt slightly uncomfortable speaking in such terms. Goettig told me that during his interview with the Peace Corps the recruiter had asked him to rate his "commitment to community" on a scale of one to five. Goettig gave himself a three. After a long pause, the recruiter started asking questions. You've worked in a drug-treatment center, right? You're teaching now, aren't you? Finally, the recruiter said, "O.K., I'll put you down as a four." Goettig told me later that one reason he signed up was that he had a girlfriend in Minnesota who wanted to get serious. I heard the same thing from a few other volunteers—the toughest job you'll ever love was also the easiest way to end a relationship.

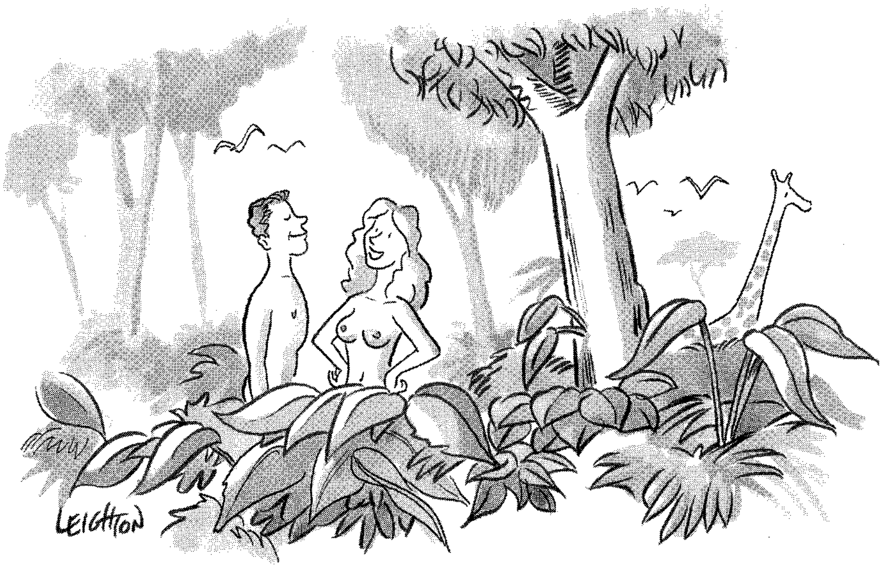
Back then, I wouldn't have told a recruiter my own true motivations. I wanted time to write, but I didn't want to go to school anymore and I couldn't imagine working a regular job. I liked the idea of learning a foreign language; I was interested in teaching for a couple of years. I sensed that life in the Peace Corps would be unstructured, which appealed to me; but they called it volunteerism, which would make my parents happy. My mother and father, in Missouri, were Catholics who remembered Kennedy fondly—later I learned that the Peace Corps has always drawn a high number of Catholics. For some reason, it's particularly popular in the Midwest. Of the thirteen volunteers in my Peace Corps group, six came from Midwestern states. It had to do with solid middle-country liberalism, but there was also an element of escape. Some of my peers had never left the country before, and one volunteer from Mississippi had never travelled in an airplane.

None of us were remotely prepared for China. Nobody had lived there or studied the language beyond a few basics; we knew virtually nothing about Chinese history. One of the first things we learned was that the Communist Party was suspicious of our presence. We were told that during the Cultural Revolution, the government had accused the Peace Corps of links with the C.I.A. These things were no longer said publicly, but some factions in the Chinese government were still wary of accepting American volunteers. It wasn't until 1993 that the first Peace Corps teachers finally showed up, and I was part of the third group.

We must have been monitored closely. I've often wondered what the Chinese security officials thought—if our cluelessness confused them or simply made them more suspicious. They must have struggled to figure out what these individuals had in common, and why the United States government had chosen to send them to China. There were a few wild cards guaranteed to throw off any assessment. A year ahead of me, an older man had joined up after retiring from the U.S. Coast Guard. Everybody called him the Captain, and he was a devoted fan of Rush Limbaugh; at training sessions he wore a Ronald Reagan T-shirt, which stood out on the Chinese college campus where he lived. At one point, I was told, a Peace Corps official said, "Maybe you should change your shirt." The Captain replied, "Maybe you should reread your Constitution." (This was in the city of Chengdu.) One day, while teaching a class of young Chinese, the Captain drew a line on the blackboard and wrote "Adam Smith" on one side and "Karl Marx" on the other. "O.K., class, short lesson today," he announced. "This works; this doesn't." In the end, the Peace Corps expelled him for breaking a cabby's side-view mirror during an argument on a Chengdu street. (This altercation happened to occur on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, a detail that probably escaped the Chinese security file.)

After a while, though, it was almost possible to forget who had sent you and why you had come. Most of us taught at small colleges in remote cities, and there wasn't much direct contact with the Peace Corps. Only occasionally did a curriculum request filter down from the top, like the campaign for Green English. This was a worldwide project: the Peace Corps wanted educational volunteers to incorporate environmental themes into their teaching. One of my peers in China started modestly, with a debate about whether littering was bad or good. This split the class right down the middle. A number of students argued passionately that lots of Chinese people were employed in picking up garbage, and if there wasn't any litter they would lose their jobs. How would people eat when all the trash was gone? The debate had no clear resolution, other than effectively ending Green English.

The experience changed you, but not necessarily in the way you'd expect. It was a bad job for hard-core idealists, most of whom ended up frustrated and unhappy. Pragmatists survived, and the smart ones set small daily goals: learning a new Chinese phrase or teaching a poem to a class of eager students. Long-term plans tended to be abandoned. Flexibility was important, and so was a sense of humor. There had been nothing funny about the Peace Corps brochures, and the typical American view of the developing world was deadly serious—there were countries to be saved and countries to be feared. That was true of the Communists, too; their propaganda didn't have an ounce of humor. But the Chinese people themselves could be surprisingly lighthearted. They laughed at everything about me: my nose, the way I dressed, my use of their language. It was a terrible place for somebody stiffly proud to be American. Sometimes I thought of the Peace Corps as a reverse refugee organization, displacing all those lost Midwesterners, and it was probably the only government entity that taught Americans to abandon key national characteristics. Pride, ambition, impatience, the instinct to control, the desire to accumulate, the missionary impulse—all of it slipped away.



"Wow—everything still has that just-created smell!"

At the shop, a few Strange Stones looked like food. This has always been a popular Chinese artistic motif, and I recognized old favorites: a rock-hard head of cabbage, a stony strip of bacon. But in my nervousness most of the shapes looked the same to me. I selected one at random and asked the price.

"Two thousand yuan," the shopkeeper said. He saw me recoil—that was nearly two hundred and fifty dollars. "But we can go cheaper," he added quickly.

"You know," Goettig said to me, "nothing else in here would break if it fell."

He was right—it was all Strange in a strictly solid sense. Why had a jade ship been there in the first place? As a last resort, I hoped that Goettig's size might discourage violence. He was six feet one and well built, with close-cropped hair and a sharp Germanic nose that the Chinese found striking. But I had never known anybody gentler, and we shuffled meekly toward the door. The men were still standing there. "I'm sorry," I said. "I don't think we want to buy anything."

The shopkeeper pointed at the pile of green shards. "*Zenmeban*?" he said softly. "What are you going to do about this?"

Goettig and I conferred, and we decided to start at fifty yuan. He took the bill out of his wallet—the equivalent of six dollars. The shopkeeper accepted it without a word. All the way across the parking lot, I expected to feel a hand on my shoulder. I started the Cherokee, spun the tires, and veered back onto Highway 110. I was still shaking when we reached the city of Zhangjiakou. We pulled over at a truck stop for lunch; I guzzled tea to calm my nerves. The waitress became excited when she learned we were Americans.

"Our boss has been to America!" she said. "I'll go get her!"

The boss was middle-aged, with dyed hair the color of shoe black. She came to our table and presented a business card, with a flourish. One side of the card was in Chinese, the other in English:

United Sources of America, Inc.
Jin Fang Liu
Deputy Director of Operations
China

Embossed in gold was a knockoff of the Presidential Seal of the United States. It looked a lot like the original, except for the eagle: the Zhangjiakou breed had pudgy wings, a thick neck, and legs like drumsticks. Even if it dropped the shield and arrows, I doubted that this bird would be capable of flight. The corner of the card said, in small print:

> President Gerald R. Ford
> Honorary Chairman

"What kind of company is this?" I asked.

"We're in the restaurant business here in Zhangjiakou," the woman said. She told me that her daughter lived in Roanoke, Virginia, where she ran another restaurant.

I pointed at the corner of the card. "Do you know who that is?"

"Fu Te," Ms. Jin said proudly, using the Chinese version of Ford's name. "He used to be President of the United States."

"What does he have to do with this restaurant?"

"It's just an honorary position," Ms. Jin said. She waved her hand in a way that suggested, *No need to tell Mr. Fu Te about our little truck stop in Zhangjiakou!* Ms. Jin gave us a discount and told us to come back anytime.

We stopped in the city of Jining for the night. The temperature had plummeted into the teens; the rain had turned to snow; I pulled into the first hotel I could find. It had a Mongol name—the Ulanqab—and the lobby was so big that it contained a bowling alley. We registered at the front desk, surrounded by the crash of balls and pins, and by now I had a pretty good idea where this trip was headed.

Travelling with Goettig was always a calculated risk. Interesting things happened when he was around, and he was unflappable, but his standards of comfort and safety were so low that he essentially had no judgment. Of all the Midwestern refugees I had known in the Peace Corps, he had come the farthest, and he seemed the least likely ever to return home. When our group first met for departure from San Francisco, Goettig had shown up with the smallest pile of luggage. He carried less than a hundred dollars, his entire life savings.

He was from southwestern Minnesota, where he had been raised by a single mother. She had two children by the age of nineteen, and after that she found jobs wherever she could—bartending, office work, waitressing at the Holiday Inn. Eventually, she took a position on the production line of a factory that manufactured bread-bag ties, in Worthington, Minnesota, a town of ten thousand people. The family stayed in a succession of trailer courts and rental apartments, and much of their home life revolved around motorcycles. Goettig's mother was a devoted biker, and in the summer they attended Harley-Davidson rallies and rodeos around the Midwest. He watched his mother's friends compete in events like Monkey in the Tree, in which a woman leaps from the back of a motorcycle to a low-hanging rope, where she dangles while the man continues around an obstacle course, returning so that the woman can drop down perfectly onto the seat. Another contest involves seeing which woman on the back of a moving bike can take the biggest bite out of a hot dog hanging from a string. When Goettig first told me about these events, I realized that I hadn't seen anything stranger in China. Goettig said that he had always disliked motorcycles.

He was the only one in his family who enjoyed reading. After high school, he had majored in English at the University of Minnesota at Morris, and then he went to graduate school at the Mankato campus of the state university. While studying for his master's, he applied to the Peace Corps. He'd seen commercials as a child, and he figured it was the best way to go overseas for free.

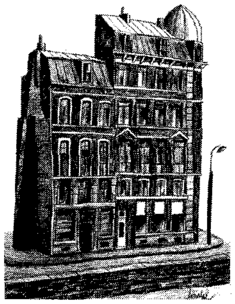
In China, he was assigned to a job teaching English in Leshan, a small city in southern Sichuan Province. With two other volunteers, he organized a play: a student version of "Snow White." Soon, college administrators recognized an opportunity for publicity, and they developed a travelling variety show. The other Peace Corps volunteers quickly washed their hands of the project, but Goettig was game for anything. He went on the road with "Snow White," travelling by bus to small towns around the province, performing at middle schools three times a day. Originally, the Woodsman was a villain, but college officials insisted that the play end with a more favorable view of the proletariat, so the Woodsman reformed and gave self-criticism. As part of the variety show, a student sang Richard Marx's "Right Here Waiting," a brass band played the "Internationale," and Goettig went onstage with a blue guitar and sang "Take Me Home, Country Roads." He was mobbed for autographs everywhere. During the bumpy rides between towns, the "Snow White" players sang songs at the top of their lungs, and gorged on raw sugarcane, spitting the pulp onto the floor of the bus. Goettig told me that those were the longest ten days of his Peace Corps service.

He learned Chinese quickly. The Peace Corps gave us two and a half months of intensive training upon arrival, and after that we could hire tutors if we wished. But the best strategy was simply to wander around, talking to people in the street. Goettig had the ideal personality for this: he was patient and curious and tireless. He was also, as the Chinese like to say, a very good drinker.

One autumn, he journeyed to Xinjiang, a wild region in China's far west. He camped alone in the Tian Shan Mountains, and one day, while hiking off trail, he clambered over some rocks and was bitten on the finger by a snake. First the finger swelled, then the hand. It took four hours to make it back to Ürümqi, the provincial capital. By then, the swelling had spread to his arm; the pain was excruciating. He found a public phone and called the Peace Corps medical officer in Chengdu. She recognized the symptoms: it sounded like a tissue-killing venomous snake, and he needed to get to a hospital, fast.

He asked bystanders for directions, and a young Chinese woman offered to help. She spoke perfect English, which was unusual, and she was dressed in a bright-orange sleeveless sweater that hung loose from her upper body like a bell. At the time, Goettig thought that the woman seemed slightly strange, but he wasn't in a position to worry about it. She accompanied him to the hospital, where doctors sliced open the bitten finger. They had some traditional Chinese medicine; Goettig figured it was a good sign that the box showed a picture of a snake. The doctors used a mortar and pestle to grind up the pills, and then they shoved the powder directly into the incision.

The swelling continued to spread. Goettig's arm turned purple at the joints, where the venom was rupturing capillaries. By evening, he realized that the woman in the orange sweater was completely insane. She had brought her luggage to the hospital; she refused to leave his side; she told everybody that she was his official translator. She wouldn't answer any personal questions—Goettig still had no idea how she had learned English. Whenever he asked her name, she responded, "My name is . . . Friend." Every time she said this, it sounded creepier, until he finally gave up on the questions. She spent the night in a chair at the foot of his bed. The next day, the doctors cut open the hand three times to shove more powder inside. The pain was intense, but at least Goettig was able to persuade some nurses to kick the crazy woman out. After the third day, the swelling began to subside; he stayed in the hospital for a week. He was so broke that the Peace Corps medical officer had to wire money to cover the bill, which was less than a hundred and fifty dollars. His hand recovered fully. He never saw the woman in the orange sweater again.



A solitary bowler was hammering the pins when we checked out of the Ulanqab Hotel. At the entrance to Highway 110, the local government had erected a sign with changeable numbers, like the scoreboard at Fenway Park:

As of This Month
This Stretch of Road
Has Had 65 Accidents and 31 Fatalities

Yesterday's storm had passed, but the temperature was still in the teens. From Jining to Hohhot the highway crossed empty steppe—low, snow-covered hills. We passed Liberation trucks that were stopped dead on the road; their fuel lines had frozen, probably because of water in their tanks. After fifteen miles, we crested a hill and saw a line of hundreds of vehicles stretching all the way to the horizon: trucks, sedans, Jeeps. Nobody was moving, and everybody was honking; an orchestra of horns howled into the wind. Never had I imagined that a traffic jam could occur in such a desolate place.

We parked the Cherokee and continued on foot to the gridlock, where drivers explained what had happened. It had all started with a few trucks whose fuel lines had frozen. Other motorists began to pass them on the two-lane road, and occasionally they encountered a stubborn oncoming car. Drivers faced off, honking, while the line of vehicles grew behind them; eventually it became impossible to move in either direction. Some had tried to go off road, and usually they made it fifty yards before getting stuck. Men in loafers slipped in the snow, trying to dig out cars with their bare hands. There was no sign of police or traffic control. Meanwhile, truckers had crawled beneath their vehicles, where they lit road flares and held them up to the frozen fuel lines. The tableau had a certain beauty: the stark, snow-covered steppes, the endless line of vehicles, the orange flames dancing beneath blue Liberation trucks.

"You should go up there and get a picture of those truckers," Goettig said.

"*You* should get a picture," I said. "I'm not getting anywhere near those guys."

At last, here on the unmarked Mongolian plains, we had crossed the shadowy line that divides Strange from Stupid. We watched the flares for a while and then took the back roads to Hohhot. The moment we arrived, the Cherokee's starter failed; we push-started the thing and made it to a garage. The mechanic chain-smoked State Guest cigarettes the whole time he worked on the engine, but after Highway 110 it seemed as harmless as a sparkler on the Fourth of July.

The hardest thing about the Peace Corps, they said, was going home. Near the end of our two years, the organization held a pre-departure conference. They handed out job-search materials, and they talked about how we might feel when we got back to America and people said things like "I didn't know they still had the Peace Corps." A few volunteers sat for the foreign-service exam. One of them got halfway through and couldn't take it seriously; for the essay section he wrote about how his world view had been influenced by the film "Air Force One." The others passed the exam but failed the interview. Over the years, I came to know more volunteers who also took that exam, and all of them were befuddled by the process—virtually nothing they had learned in the field seemed relevant.

From the beginning, the Peace Corps had represented a type of foreign aid, but another goal had been to produce Americans with knowledge about the outside world which could benefit their own country. The organization had been inspired in part by the 1958 book "The Ugly American," which criticized a top-down approach to foreign affairs. At some level, I came away with a deep faith in the transformative power of the Peace Corps: everybody I knew had been changed forever by the experience. But these changes were of the sort that generally made people less likely to work for the government. Volunteers tended to be individualists to begin with, and few were ambitious in the traditional sense. Once abroad, they learned to live with a degree of chaos, which made it hard to have faith in the possibility of sweeping change.

Many of my peers in China eventually became teachers. It was partly because we had been educational volunteers, but it also had to do with the skills we developed—the flexibility, the sense of humor, the willingness to handle anything an eighth grader could throw at us. A few became writers and journalists; some went to graduate school. Others continued to wander, and Goettig stayed in China for years. During summer, he worked for the Peace Corps, training new volunteers, and the rest of the time he picked up odd jobs: writing freelance newspaper stories, working part-time as a translator and researcher. Periodically, he came through Beijing and slept on my couch for a week. The term of Peace Corps service is lifetime when it comes to guests. Sometimes I had three or four ex-volunteers staying in my apartment, all of them big Midwesterners drinking Yanjing beer and laughing about old times.

In the southwestern city of Kunming, Goettig opened a bar with a Chinese partner. They found space in an old bomb shelter; the lease explicitly stated that they had to abandon the premises if China went to war. They had two pool tables and a stage for bands. Not long after they opened, there was a bad knife fight—one of the bartenders got stabbed multiple times, and part of a lung had to be removed. The bar didn't have much business, and Goettig and his partner barely scraped together enough money to cover the medical bills. Goettig had named the place the Speakeasy.

The year after we drove across northern China, Goettig finally returned to the United States. He was thirty years old and nearly broke. He went back to southwestern Minnesota, but he couldn't imagine living there again; after a month, he caught a Greyhound bus heading south. Some other former volunteers were living in Starkville, Mississippi; they let Goettig crash in their home and found him a job teaching English to foreign students at Mississippi State. It paid twenty-four thousand dollars for the school year. When Goettig looked into teacher-certification programs, he realized that they took almost as long as law school. He bought some books about the L.S.A.T., studied on his own, and scored off the charts. The next time I saw him, he was living on Riverside Drive, studying at Columbia Law School. In his spare time, he did Chinese-language research for Human Rights Watch. Eventually, he became the editor-in-chief of Columbia's *Journal of Asian Law*. He wore a certain expression I recognized from China—slightly stunned, a little overwhelmed, completely out of his element. He had no idea where this was going, but he was happy to hang on for the ride.

At the end of the drive, we followed Highway 215 to the Tibetan Plateau. The two-lane road was flanked by high-desert landscapes of rock and dirt, punctuated by highway-safety propaganda. Along one stretch, the government had perched a wrecked car on spindly ten-foot poles beside the road. The vehicle had been smashed beyond recognition: the front end was crumpled flat and the remains of a door dangled in strips of steel. Across the back were painted the words, "Four People Died." It was like some gruesome version of a children's treat—a Carsicle. Another sign presented the speed limit like options on a menu:

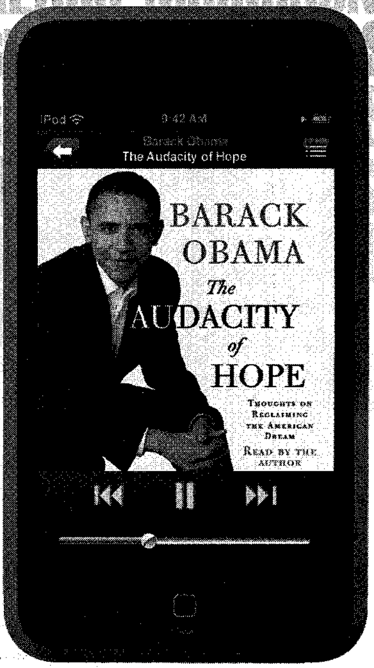
40 km/hr Is the Safest
80 km/hr Is Dangerous
100 km/hr Is Bound for the Hospital

The road climbed steeply to the border of Qinghai Province. We passed slow-moving Liberation trucks, their engines whining in the thin air; my altimeter read nearly twelve thousand feet. For a hundred and fifty miles we saw almost no sign of human habitation. There were no gas stations or restaurants or shops; the first town we passed had been recently razed. Roofless walls stood stark on the plateau, lonely as the traces of some lost empire.

In Qinghai, Goettig's left eye began to act up. First it watered and then it hurt; he sat in the passenger's seat, rubbing his face with his fist. We crossed another twelve-thousand-foot pass and descended to Qinghai Lake. It's the largest body of water in China, a salt lake more than two hundred miles in circumference and blue as a sapphire. We camped on the banks, pitching my tent on a finger of land. It was one of the most beautiful places I had ever visited in China, but by now Goettig could hardly see a thing.

The next morning, he lay in the tent, moaning. "It hurts like hell," he said. "It just keeps burning." He had taken out his contacts, but his eyes still hurt; he asked how many hours it would be to Xining, the provincial capital. "Maybe we'll have to find an eye doctor in Xining," he said. It occurred to me that this was the most ominous sentence I'd heard in about six thousand miles. The eye would eventually recover, and he later learned that the problem had been caused by his contact lenses. In Kunming, a friend had told him that a local shop was selling Johnson & Johnson lenses for half the usual price—a great deal, and Goettig stocked up. It turned out that the contacts were counterfeit. That became a new rule: when in Kunming, don't buy contact lenses on sale. China was full of lessons; we were still learning every day. Don't hike off trail in Xinjiang. Don't shop for Strange Stones in a bad part of Hebei. Don't hang out with people who light flares under stalled trucks. Driving alongside the lake, we passed another Carsicle, although Goettig's eyes were watering so badly he couldn't see it. He wept all the way across Qinghai—he wept along the salt lake's barren banks, and he wept past the stranded Carsicle, and he wept through the long descent from the roof of the world. ♦

SEDARIS READS SEDARIS. KING READS KING. OBAMA READS OBAMA. GILBERT READS GILBERT. GLADWELL READS GLADWELL. CLINTON READS CLINTON. MCCOURT READS MCCOURT. MORRISON READS MORRISON.



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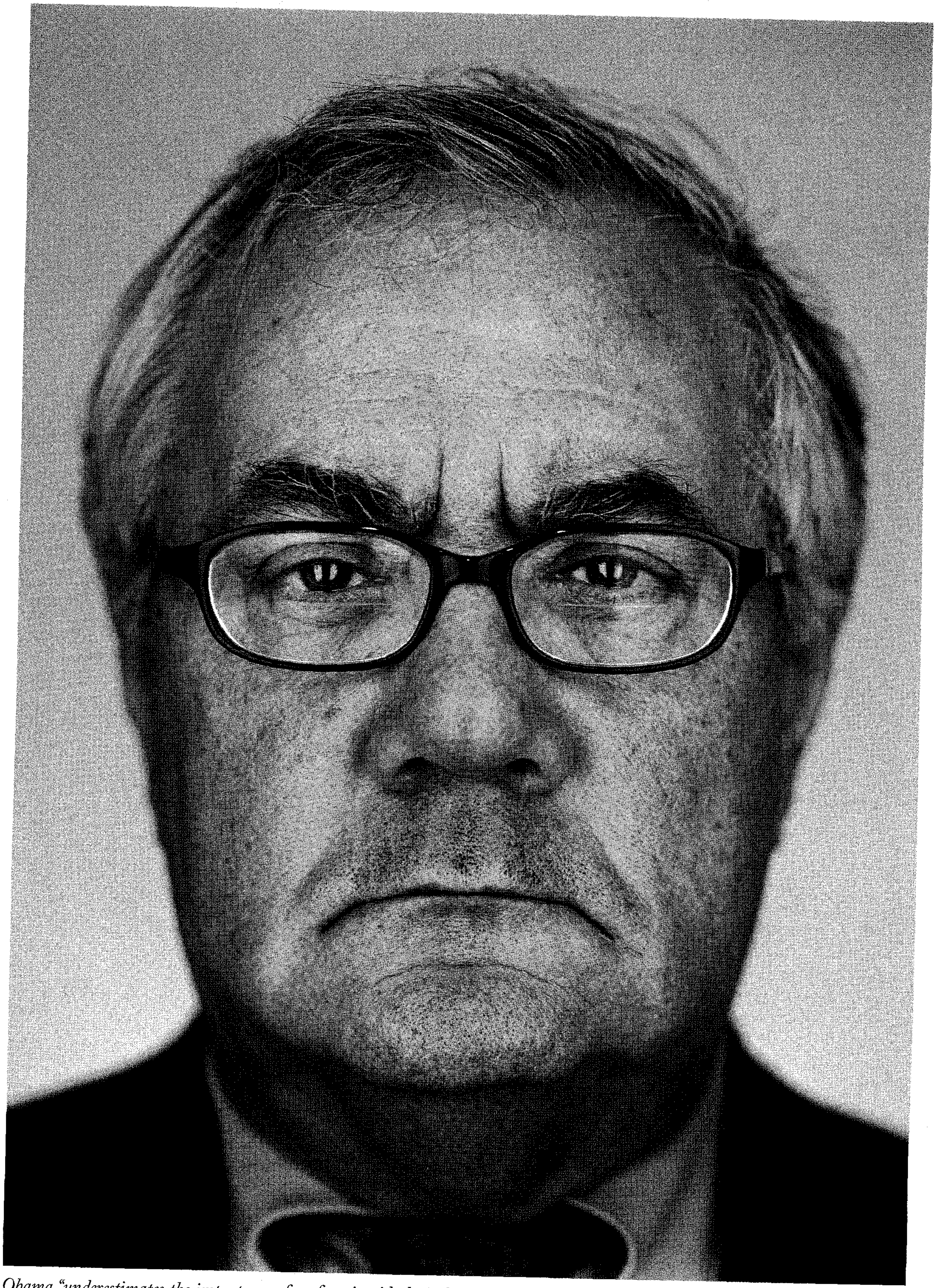

Obama "underestimates the importance of confronting ideological differences," Barney Frank says. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

PROFILES

BARNEY'S GREAT ADVENTURE

The most outspoken man in the House gets some real power.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

Of the four hundred and thirty-five members of the House of Representatives, Barney Frank is the only one whose public remarks have been collected in a book of quotations ("Frank Talk: The Wit and Wisdom of Barney Frank," published in 2006). He is also the only congressman whose fight against the impeachment of President Bill Clinton has been the subject of a documentary, which was shown to acclaim at film festivals around the country ("Let's Get Frank," directed by Bart Everly). Frank is not the only member of Congress to have been the subject of a full-scale biography, but the account of his life, written by a former aide named Stuart E. Weisberg, to be published by the University of Massachusetts Press later this year, will likely rank among the more exhaustive and admiring books ever printed about a sitting member of the House, who is described as "arguably the most unique and fascinating, certainly the most entertaining political figure in Washington."

The title of the book suggests the basis for the widespread interest: "Barney Frank: The Story of America's Only Left-Handed, Gay, Jewish Congressman." Now sixty-eight years old, Frank has represented Massachusetts's Fourth Congressional District since 1981, and he remains best known for his decision, in 1987, to reveal that he is gay, becoming the first member of Congress to do so voluntarily. At the time, the disclosure provoked more curiosity than controversy, but, two years later, Stephen Gobie, a prostitute whom Frank had patronized and then befriended, made a series of lurid allegations about him—claiming that they had had sex in the House gym and that Frank had permitted Gobie to run a prostitution ring out of his home. An investigation by the House Ethics Committee failed to substantiate those charges, though it determined that Frank had written a misleading letter of recommendation for Gobie and had Gobie's parking tickets waived. Nevertheless, Frank was reëlected with ease, and he became a pointed critic of the Republicans who took control of the House in 1994 and a passionate opponent of Clinton's impeachment, in 1998. A witty and effective presence on the House floor and in committee rooms, Frank in recent years has settled into the roles of wise guy and wise man of the Democratic Party. (Conservatives "believe that life begins at conception and ends at birth," he once remarked. More recently, he noted that Barack Obama's continued insistence that we have one President at a time "overstates the number of Presidents we have.") In a 2006 poll of Capitol Hill staffers by *Washingtonian*, published shortly before the elections that gave Democrats control of the House for the first time in twelve years, Frank was voted the brainiest, funniest, and most eloquent congressman—a notable achievement, since he often speaks in a barely comprehensible mumble.

During the financial crisis this fall, Frank's status as a gay trailblazer suddenly seemed remote and irrelevant. After the Democrats' victory, he became chairman of the Committee on Financial Services, and Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House, designated him the Democrats' chief negotiator with the Bush Administration on legislation to address the crises in the banking and auto industries. "Through this all, the quarterback for us is Barney," Pelosi told me. "He's solution-oriented, respectful of different perspectives, and brilliant. And it's brilliance that saves time, because he simplifies the complex for us. He is an enormously valuable intellectual resource for the Congress."

For the first time in more than forty years of public life, Frank has real power, and he is wielding it in a characteristically idiosyncratic manner. He remains a national symbol of outré sexuality as well as a rare wit in generally humor-deficient Washington. But in Congress he is thought of no longer simply as a liberal of the old school (which he is) but also as a grind. His expertise is in one of the least glamorous subjects on the national agenda—housing, particularly rental housing for poor people—and he is using that knowledge to confront the nation's economic crisis. "For Barney, the question has always been: What works? What can government do to see that people have the decent necessities of life?" his sister Ann Lewis, the longtime Democratic activist, says. "Now he's right there. Barney's been preparing for this moment for his entire life."

The contours of Frank's Massachusetts district have shifted over the years, but his political base has long been the liberal, heavily Jewish suburbs of Newton and Brookline. (Brookline was once part of the district represented by Tip O'Neill, the former Speaker of the House, but he surrendered it to Frank's predecessor, Father Robert Drinan, saying, according to Frank, "I can't take all the phone calls. Those nice Jewish ladies even call when they agree with you!") Much of the campus of Boston College, a Jesuit institution, also lies within Frank's district, and two days after the recent election he paid a visit to the B.C. Real Estate Council, an alumni group.

Boston College has become a major national university in recent years, but the hundred or so older graduates at the luncheon reflected the school's Irish-Catholic roots. Frank ambled to the podium in his standard uniform: a monochromatic suit, a white shirt, and a rep tie. The look is an improvement on the dishevelled attire that was once his trademark. When Frank was running for state representative in Boston, in the early nineteen-seventies, a campaign poster featured his photograph and the words "Neatness Isn't Everything." In conversation, and even in his speeches, Frank often refers to his lifelong struggle to lose weight, but he is well into his seventh decade, and that battle seems to have been lost, a plight accentuated by his apparent tendency to buy shirts in his aspirational, rather than his actual, size.

Frank never speaks from a prepared text, and he talks so quickly that transcription is nearly impossible. His staff in Washington sometimes posts videos of his remarks on the Web instead. Frank has lived in Massachusetts since he was a freshman at Harvard, in the late nineteen-fifties, but his accent is still marked by a virulent strain of his native New Jersey—he is from Bayonne. (Early in Frank's congressional career, Toby Moffett, a representative from Connecticut, jokingly asked for U.N.-style simultaneous translations of Frank's remarks during committee hearings.)

Frank rarely smiles, even when he's being funny. "There are three lies politicians tell," he told the real-estate group. "The first is 'We ran against each other but are still good friends.' That's never true. The second is 'I like campaigning.' Anyone who tells you they like campaigning is either a liar or a sociopath. Then, there's 'I hate to say I told you so.'" He went on, "Everybody likes to say 'I told you so.' I have found personally that it is one of the few pleasures that improves with age. I can say 'I told you so' without taking a pill before, during, or after I do it." A priest and several older men at my table realized that Frank was talking about sex, and, embarrassed, they stared at their hands. But the moment passed quickly. In Frank's district, at least, his homosexuality provokes little controversy, even at a Catholic school. (Elsewhere, Frank no longer censors his ribald sense of humor. Not long ago, Paul Begala, the political strategist, was speaking at a fund-raiser for a gay-rights group and said, "When I told my father, back in Texas, that I was speaking to an L.G.B.T. group, he said that sounded like a sandwich." From the audience, Frank called out, "Sometimes it is!")

Frank told the group at Boston College that he predicted, and might have prevented, the real-estate crisis that has engulfed the economy. By this time, many aspects of the crisis were well known. The end of the housing bubble had caused home values to plummet and mortgage defaults to rise, particularly among subprime borrowers. Many financial-services firms had assembled mortgages and bought and sold them as securities, and the value of those assets had also declined sharply—a development that devastated the firms. The investment banks Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers had closed their doors, and the financial-services industry was on the brink of collapse, even after Congress authorized an emergency seven-hundred-billion-dollar bailout, in October.

According to Frank, at the root of the real-estate crisis was a misguided notion that homeownership should be available to all people—what President Bush has called "the ownership society." "The 'I told you so' here is that homeownership is a nice thing but it is not suitable for everybody," Frank said at Boston College. "There are people in this society who don't have enough money to be homeowners, and there are people whose lives are not sufficiently integrated for them to take on the responsibility to be a homeowner. And we did too much pushing of people into inappropriate mortgages and into homeownership." He said that many people would always be renters, and that there was nothing wrong with this. "We need to get back in the business of building rental housing and preserving the housing we have," he said.

In one respect, Frank went on, the current crisis has had a salutary effect: home prices have fallen, making homes more affordable for those who still have the money to buy them. "But we need to be bringing down the cost of housing in an orderly way, like by building new housing to increase the supply," he said. "We've brought the cost down a little bit in a less orderly way. I tend to eat when I'm under stress. I want to lose twenty-five pounds—but not by Sunday. And that's how home prices have come down." (Frank speaks incessantly about food. In "Let's Get Frank," he complains about the low-fat provisions given to Democratic members of the Judiciary Committee during the impeachment debate. Referring to Dick Gephardt, who was the Minority Leader at the time, Frank says, "They got all this jelly-doughnut shit in there, and I gotta eat this stuff. . . . Gephardt's a *sheygets*—whaddaya expect from Gephardt?" *Sheygets* is Yid-

"I blame all the violent cave paintings."

dish for a male Gentile, and thus one who cannot be trusted to provide acceptable snacks.)

"You talkin' to me?"

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Frank arrived in Congress when the Reagan Administration was withdrawing the federal government from the business of building housing for the poor. At the time, it was clear that the private sector had little incentive to build low-income housing without government assistance in the form of tax breaks or subsidies. The Reagan Administration assisted low-income renters by offering them vouchers to help them pay rent and by providing tax credits to local developers who built low-income housing. In subsequent years, Frank has fought with intermittent success to preserve such programs from major budget cuts.

In 2001, Frank embraced a new approach. That year, Bernie Sanders, then a representative from Vermont, sponsored a bill to create a government trust fund that would be used for building and renovating low-income housing. Sanders's legislation didn't pass, but the idea was later reintroduced, and Frank backed a proposal for funding the trust with a portion of the annual revenue of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—the Federal National Mortgage Association and the Federal Home Mortgage Corporation, the two giant, government-backed mortgage companies. The funding for the trust would be automatic—not subject to annual congressional approval. "I realized, because housing has been a backwater, getting appropriations for housing is going to be tough," Frank told me. "First of all, if you want to build housing, it can't be year by year. You know, it's construction. But, two, I'm finding money outside the appropriations process, money from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. So I can do a lot of units without directly competing for the appropriations."

The idea was based on a variety of similar programs at the state and local levels. In the past few decades, governments across the country have set up nearly six hundred trust funds to build low-income housing, typically by collecting small taxes or fees from real-estate transactions. "There was positive buzz for what was happening with state and local trust funds, but the amounts were really a drop in the bucket," Barbara Sard, the director of housing policy at the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said. "But the dream for making a real difference in low-income rental housing has been to do it at the federal level, and that's what Barney has been trying to do."

In 2007, Frank used his influence as committee chairman to insure that the housing trust-fund bill finally passed the House. In 2008, a similar measure made it through the Senate as part of a larger bill, which President Bush signed. By that time, however, Fannie and Freddie were mired in debt, and the value of their shares was collapsing. And, because Frank's committee was supposed to oversee the two mortgage giants, he faced questions about what he might have done to avoid the catastrophe.

The Committee on Financial Services, which has seventy members, is one of the biggest panels in Congress. (It was known as the Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs Committee until the Democrats lost control of the House in 1994, and Frank attributes the change to "Republican political correctness.") Congressional hearings customarily begin with statements from members, a practice that can take hours. Frank and Michael Oxley, the Ohio Republican who was his predecessor as chairman, shared a distaste for the tradition, and together they were known as the "impatient caucus." Still, Frank allows his colleagues to speak briefly before a hearing, and, on October 21st, Scott Garrett, a conservative Republican from New Jersey, used his time to attack Frank—in particular, his claim that he had anticipated the crisis.

"Before we are able to go forward with new and important changes to the over-all regulatory structure for our financial-services industry, I do believe that it is essential that we better understand just how we got into this problem," Garrett said. "Now, one of the main parts of the problem was poor regulation in the past, specifically in the area of Fannie and Freddie." According to Garrett, "our distinguished chairman" had no right "to claim the mantle of being a champion of reform with Fannie and Freddie." On the contrary, Garrett argued, he and other Republicans had wanted to "raise the capital levels, to reduce the retained portfolios, to lower the conforming loan limits."

Garrett's accusations were genteel compared with those made by Bill O'Reilly, a few weeks earlier, when Frank appeared on his show on Fox News. "You blame everybody else! You're a coward!" O'Reilly bellowed. "In any private concern, you're out on your butt! But not here in the federal government!"

Frank, in turn, berated O'Reilly for his "ranting" and "stupidity." (The confrontation has been viewed more than a million times on YouTube.)

At the hearing, Frank responded testily to Garrett. "The purpose of this hearing was to be forward-looking," he began. "And I had hoped we could focus on that. But, after the gentleman from New Jersey's comments in having decried partisanship, he then practiced it. It does seem to me to be important to set the record clearly before us." Frank pointed out that when Garrett had attempted to tighten regulations on Fannie and Freddie, Republicans had controlled the House. "Had a Republican majority been in favor of passing that bill, they would have done it," Frank said. "Now he has claimed that it was we Democrats—myself—who blocked things. The number of occasions on which either Newt Gingrich or Tom DeLay consulted me about the specifics of legislation are far fewer than the gentleman from New Jersey seems to think.

"I will acknowledge that during the twelve years of Republican rule I was unable to stop them from impeaching Bill Clinton," Frank went on. "I was unable to stop them from interfering in Terri Schiavo's husband's affairs. I was unable to stop their irresponsible tax cuts, the war in Iraq, and a Patriot Act that did not include civil liberties." In other words, Frank insisted, if the Republicans had wanted to try to prevent the mortgage crisis, they would have had plenty of opportunities to do so.

Frank and I discussed his role in the housing crisis at his district headquarters, in a small office building in Newton. His boyfriend, Jim Ready, who runs an awning company in Maine, had just returned from Whole Foods with Frank's lunch, a salad, which he was eating with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm. Frank explained that he first became interested in housing during his service, in the late sixties, as the top aide to Kevin White, who was then the mayor of Boston. The city had a long history of building public housing, mostly high-rises, and White pledged to encourage the construction of small apartment complexes, in keeping with the scale of most Boston neighborhoods.

"At first, when you talk about affordable housing and subsidized housing, people immediately ask, 'What sort of public housing?' " Frank said. " 'Is it run by the city, like Cabrini-Green?' "—a notorious, now demolished project in Chicago. "And we long ago learned how not to do that, but that still was in people's heads. And if you can do a word-association test, where a picture floated out in people's heads, there would be these sterile high-rises. And it struck me, before I conceptualized this, that the answer to that was public-private partnership, that that's the way to do affordable housing. And then it struck me: You know what? This is the model for other things. Public-private-sector coöperation."

When White was mayor, one of the most infamous public-housing projects in the city was Columbia Point, in Dorchester. The project was said to be so dangerous that ambulances refused to enter it without a police escort. In a process begun under White, and shepherded in its early days by Frank, Columbia Point was turned over to a private developer, who converted it to a mixed-income community, which included housing for the poor and market-rent apartments for the more affluent. "Barney is a real capitalist," Joe Corcoran, the developer who took over Columbia Point, told me. "He understands that we have to make a profit. Barney is the smartest politician I've ever seen. I have no problem with him being gay, or being Jewish. I like Jews. I like doing business with Jews. They know how to make a deal."

Frank's experience in city hall in Boston led to an impatience with abstractions. He recalled a comment by Lawrence Summers, the former president of Harvard, who will be the director of the National Economic Council in the Obama Administration: "Larry said, 'Oh, well, in the history of the world, nobody ever washed a rented car.' Well, people wash leased cars all the time. And, secondly, poor people don't rent cars. It's just one of those irrelevant things." Frank went on, "In 2004, it was Bush who started to push Fannie and Freddie into subprime mortgages, because they were boasting about how they were expanding homeownership for low-income people. And I said at the time, 'Hey—(a) this is going to jeopardize their profitability, but (b) it's going to put people in homes they can't afford, and they're gonna lose them.' " (In a recent op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, Lawrence B. Lindsey, a former economic adviser to President Bush, wrote that Frank "is the only politician I know who has argued that we needed tighter rules that intentionally produce fewer homeowners and more renters.") Frank recalled with disdain a Bush Administration proposal to allow time limits on rental vouchers for poor people. "They said, 'Well, don't you agree that we should limit the amount of time people have a voucher?' I said, 'Yes, if you limit the amount of time they can be poor—"I'm sorry, you can only be poor for four years." ' "

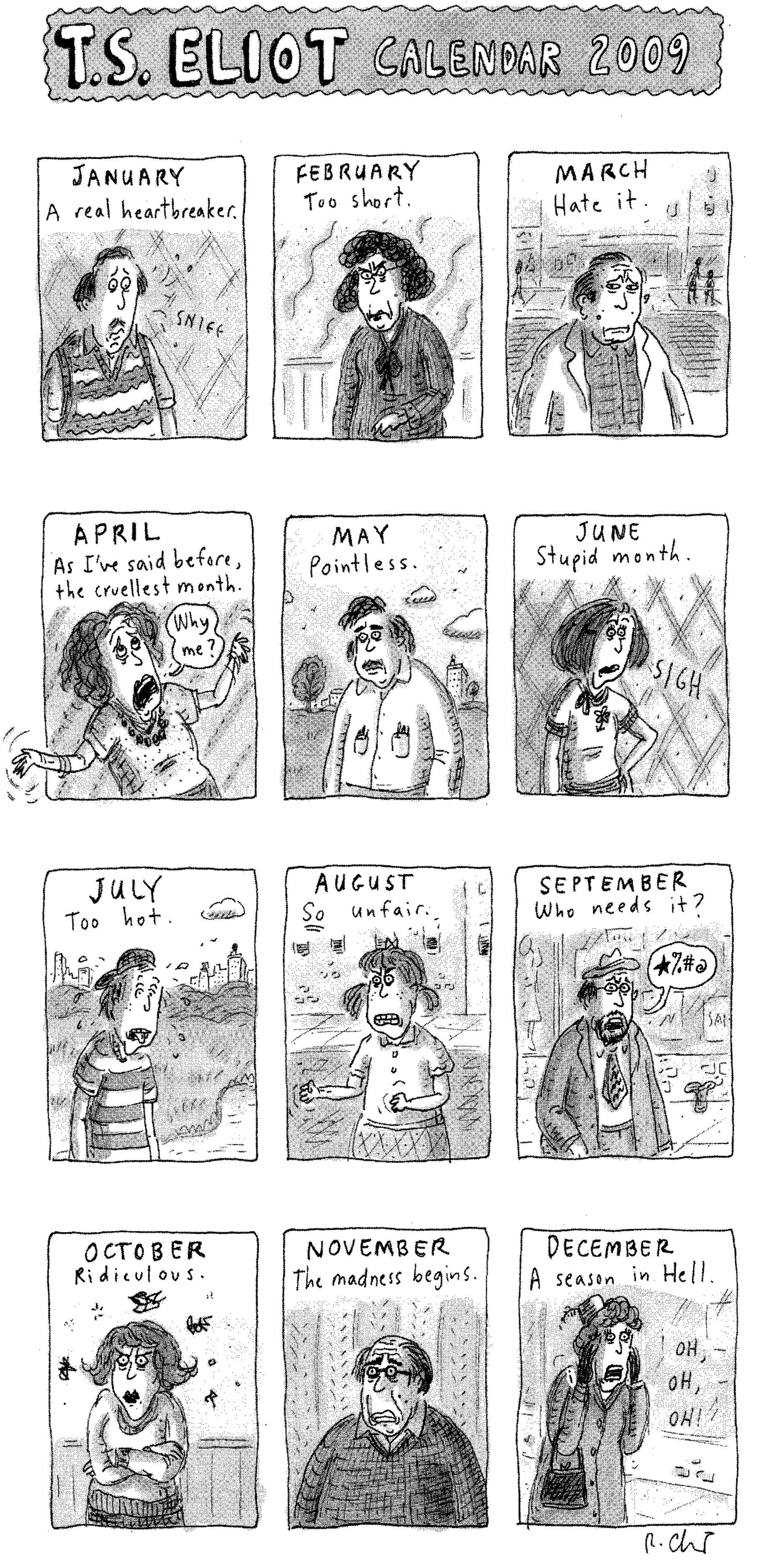
In 2005, while the Democrats were still in the minority, Frank contributed to a bipartisan effort to put his objectives—tighter regulation of Fannie and Freddie and new funds for rental housing—into law. At the time, Fannie and Freddie were regulated by a small agency within the Department of Housing and Urban Development; the bill proposed to create an independent agency to monitor their operations. Frank and Michael Oxley, who was then chairman of the Financial Services Committee, achieved broad bipartisan support for the bill in the committee, and it passed the House. But the Senate never voted on the measure, in part because President Bush was likely to veto it. "If it had passed, that would have been one of the ways we could have reined in the bowling ball going downhill called housing," Oxley told me. "Barney, to some extent, is misunderstood—with this image of him as a fierce partisan. He is an institutionalist. He believes in the House and in the process. He eschews the grandstanding style that so many members use and prefers to work behind the scenes and get something done."

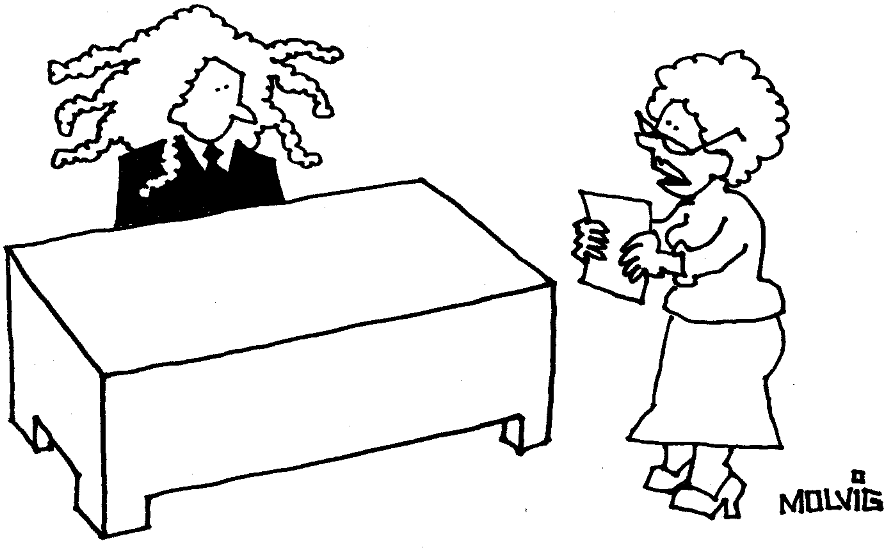
Frank's prescience on the housing crisis should not be overstated, because Fannie and Freddie represented only one aspect of the problem. "Fannie and Freddie were contributors to the bubble, but they came late in the really bad loans, after the private issuers like Merrill and Citigroup," Dean Baker, the co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in Washington, said. "The law probably would have curtailed their lending, but it's hard to say it would have made any difference. The real problem was outside of Fannie and Freddie, with the banks, and nobody in Congress was talking about it."

Frank hopes that the housing trust fund won't have to rely entirely on Fannie and Freddie for money. He intends to secure additional funding from, among other sources, the Federal Housing Administration, a division of the Department of Housing and Urban Development which insures mortgages. Specifically, he wants to fund the trust with profits from an F.H.A. program that allows older homeowners to borrow money against the equity in their homes. "We're going to expand that program, which makes money for the federal government, and start with part of the profits from it," Frank told me. "If you know how the government works, you can find ways to do what you want."

The number of housing units that will be built or renovated with funds from the trust is likely to be modest at first. (Frank declined to provide an estimate.) But the money will be available to both nonprofit and commercial developers, fulfilling Frank's longtime goal of promoting public-private partnerships. "Barney has been our champion in the House, and he has been unbelievably effective," Sheila Crowley, the president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, which lobbied for the establishment of the trust, said. "If the bill hadn't come out of Barney's committee to the House with universal Democratic support and strong support from moderate Republicans, the Senate wouldn't have paid any attention. But Barney got it done."

The bill takes effect this year, but it's unclear whether the housing trust will work as Frank expects. "I am skeptical that a national housing trust will address the real problems in our housing markets," Edward Glaeser, a Harvard economics professor who studies the housing market, said. "In many places, there is a lot of housing available at low prices. In Buffalo and throughout the industrial Midwest, there's loads of low-cost rental housing available. The private sector in Houston does a great job of providing low-cost rental housing without help from the government. The question is whether this program will make a difference in places like New York and San Francisco, where there is a shortage. It's not obvious that you want to think about new or renovated housing for poor Americans. Poor people buy used cars. There's no reason to think that used housing isn't often the right an-


T.S. ELIOT CALENDAR 2009
JANUARY
A real heartbreaker.
SNIFF
FEBRUARY
Too short.
MARCH
Hate it.
APRIL
As I've said before, the cruellest month.
Why me?
MAY
Pointless.
JUNE
Stupid month.
SIGH
JULY
Too hot.
AUGUST
So unfair.
SEPTEMBER
Who needs it?
★%#@
OCTOBER
Ridiculous.
NOVEMBER
The madness begins.
DECEMBER
A season in Hell.
OH, OH, OH!



"Jamaica called. They want their culture back."

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swer as well." Moreover, it's not clear that Frank's determination to avoid the annual congressional appropriations process makes good public policy. "Once you have funding on automatic pilot, the money is spent regardless of what other priorities are there for the federal government and whether it's properly targeted and properly administered," David John, who studies housing as a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, said. "This is why we have an appropriations process." Scott Garrett, Frank's colleague and ideological adversary on the Financial Services Committee, told me, "Barney has a great deal of faith in government's ability to solve people's problems. The question is whether that faith is justified."

When the Republicans won control of Congress in 1994, the Democratic leadership in the House made Frank a kind of one-man immediate-response team to Newt Gingrich, the new House Speaker. Frank and Gingrich sparred almost daily, and Frank still professes surprise that Gingrich took their disagreements personally. "Barney Frank hates me," Gingrich said at the time. (He would not discuss the matter for this article.) According to Frank, Gingrich is a "bleeder"—a derogatory term for a boxer who is prone to cuts. For Frank, the word has particular resonance: one of his high-school classmates was Chuck Wepner, a heavyweight boxer who was known as the Bayonne Bleeder.

"My first day of high school, I was sent to the vice-principal for discipline, because I got in trouble for talking too much," Frank told me. "When I got to her office, Chuck was already there. He'd gotten into a fight with the toughest kid in the school." (In 1975, Wepner went fifteen rounds in a heavyweight championship bout against Muhammad Ali and, in so doing, it has been said, inspired Sylvester Stallone to create the character Rocky.)

Frank's parents, Sam and Elsie, raised their four children in a distinctly less rarefied setting than the ones in which they all eventually arrived. Sam Frank operated Tooley's Truck Terminal, near the mouth of the Holland Tunnel in Jersey City. "My father ran a truck stop," Frank told me. "He sort of lived on the fringes. We're talking about Hudson County—Frank Hague was the boss—a totally corrupt place. In 1946, my father's brother Harry got the contract to sell cars to the city, and of course he had to give a kickback to the guys who ran the city. My father was a middleman or something." Sam was subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury about the matter. He refused and was found in criminal contempt. "For a while, he was hiding out from the cops in New York," Frank recalled. "I was six years old, and once I went to see him in the city, and we saw 'Robin Hood,' with Errol Flynn. The next day, the cops came to my first-grade class to interview me, to see if I had been with my dad. My father's sister, Aunt Minnie, taught at the school. She heard about the cops coming and went straight to my classroom to break it up, so I didn't have to talk."

Eventually, Sam returned to New Jersey, and was jailed for refusing to testify. "They treated him nice," Frank said. "They let my mother bring him food. He served for about a year." The incident notwithstanding, Frank's parents instilled in their children a belief in the power of the government to do good. "We had this great good fortune of growing up with parents who took politics seriously," Frank's sister Ann Lewis told me. "The idea that people could choose their leaders was not a small thing in the aftermath of World War II." Lewis, who is two years older than Frank, said that Frank was outspoken even as a boy. "Our uncle Rosie was a sportswriter, and Barney was a huge Yankees fan, and one day around 1950, when Barney was around ten, Rosie brought home a talent scout for the Yankees," she said. "And I remember Barney asking the guy why the Yankees didn't have any black ballplayers. I was very struck by that. I looked at the kid, and I thought, That's a really tough thing to do. Good for you."

"Barney was a famous person at sixteen," Alan Dershowitz, the Harvard Law School professor, who dated a classmate of Frank's at Bayonne High School, said. "He talked exactly like he talks now, and he was always talking, always involved in every kind of politics. Because Bayonne was such a sleazy place, nobody knew whether Barney was going to wind up in Congress or in jail." According to Frank, his father was involved with the Mafia. "Funzi Tieri, a big-time gangster with the Genovese family, came to my brother David's bar mitzvah, when I was twenty-three," he said. Sam Frank died at the age of fifty-three, while Barney was an undergraduate at Harvard, and Barney took a year off to help resolve the family's tangled financial affairs. "The Mafia guys were very helpful to me at the time," he said.

All four Frank children settled far from Bayonne. Ann Lewis, the eldest, was the director of communications in the Clinton White House and a top aide to Hillary Clinton during her Presidential campaign. David Frank works as a speechwriter for the A.A.R.P., and Doris Breay is an administrator at Brandeis University who frequently campaigns for her brother.

In the nineteen-seventies, Elsie Frank moved to Boston and later became the president of the Massachusetts Association of Older Americans. During Barney's first reëlection campaign, in 1982—a tough race, because redistricting forced him to run against another incumbent, Margaret Heckler—Elsie was featured in a series of television commercials for her son. She died in 2005.

Earlier this fall, the Democrats in the House had to take sides when Henry Waxman, of California, challenged John Dingell, of Michigan, for the chairmanship of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, which Dingell had held for a year. (Dingell also chaired the committee from 1981 to 1995.) The contest represented a classic ideological confrontation between the left and the center of the Democratic Party. As chairman of the House oversight committee, Waxman, an outspoken, pro-environment liberal, led high-profile investigations of Republican wrongdoings, while Dingell, a pro-labor moderate, is known as a behind-the-scenes player, often on behalf of the automobile industry.

Frank voted for Dingell, who lost, 137–122. "I thought Henry was making a great mistake," Frank told me in his office in the Rayburn House Office Building. "One of the advantages we have today is that we appear to be much less ideologically driven than the Republicans. I think there is a danger of what will look like liberal overreach. We need all the moderates to pass legislation, even at two hundred and fifty-seven"—the number of Democrats in the House after the 2008 election. "If Dingell and Waxman were running ab initio, I'd vote for Waxman. But I do think there should be some burden of proof before you throw out a chairman."

To the public, Frank looks much like Waxman—a blunt partisan with a flair for sound bites—but, like Dingell, he has a record as a pragmatic legislator. He graduated from Harvard in 1962 and began a long, ultimately unsuccessful quest there for a Ph.D. in government. (I once asked him the subject of his planned dissertation. "The Massachusetts legislature," he told me. What about the legislature? "I never got much farther than that," he said. He later attended Harvard Law School, and graduated in 1977.) In the mid-sixties, as a teaching assistant at Harvard, Frank lived on campus and had time for non-academic pursuits. He spent five weeks registering black voters in Mississippi, and travelled around the country as an organizer for the activist Allard Lowenstein, an early leader of what would become the student movement of the late sixties. Frank also befriended a group of young, reform-oriented politicians, who hoped to wrest control of the commonwealth from the long-serving Democratic Party stalwarts who dominated state government. In time, his circle of politician friends coalesced into an entity known as the Democratic Study Group, for which Frank served as an unpaid executive director, and which quickly came to center on a young state representative from Brookline named Michael Dukakis.

"At the time, Massachusetts was one of the three or four most corrupt states in the country," Dukakis told me. "About twenty or thirty of us young reform types decided to start a little organization that would give us some clout, on basic progressive legislation and conflict-of-interest and integrity stuff. We persuaded Barney to take the Red Line down from Harvard to be our staff guy—for free. He hasn't changed. He was smart as hell and funny as hell and worked like hell."

In 1967, Frank was invited to work on Kevin White's first campaign for mayor of Boston. White, who was thirty-eight, belonged to a generation of charismatic young politicians—including John V. Lindsay, in New York—who ran on platforms dedicated to empowering neighborhoods and cooling inner-city tensions, and he narrowly defeated Louise Day Hicks, a former chairperson of the Boston School Committee, who opposed the desegregation of local public schools. "The White administration was an incredible burst of energy, and Barney was effectively Kevin's chief of staff," Fred Salvucci, who ran White's "little city hall," in East Boston, said. "We stopped the expansion of Logan Airport, traded highway funds for mass transit, did all this stuff, and Barney was the guy we went to for answers. Other than saying, 'Talk faster, I'm busy,' because his mind was working faster than mine, he was great to work with, even though I couldn't understand his accent a lot of the time."

In 1972, Frank ran for state representative in a district that included much of Boston's Back Bay. He profited from student enthusiasm about the Presidential race that year. "I am one of the few people in the country who can say he benefitted from George McGovern's coattails," he has said. Once elected, Frank became known for witty banter and harsh partisanship. After Michael Dukakis won the governorship, in 1974, Frank became one of his most vociferous critics, repeatedly accusing him of betraying his liberal principles.

"I inherited a mess," Dukakis told me. "The state was a shambles, with twelve and a half per cent unemployment. *Time* magazine was calling us the New Appalachia. It was depressing stuff. I had to do some hard cutting, and Barney was upset about it, and I can understand why." Liberal outrage at Dukakis grew so intense that in the 1978 election he drew a primary challenger from the left, Barbara Ackerman, a former mayor of Cambridge, in addition to an opponent from the right, Edward J. King, a pro-business former football player. Frank endorsed Ackerman over Dukakis. "The real point of Ackerman's campaign," Barney told his biographer, Stuart Weisberg, "was to show Dukakis that there was a price to be paid for hurting poor people."

King defeated Dukakis in the Democratic primary and went on to become a conservative governor. "Yeah, I didn't see Ed King coming on as strongly as he did," Frank told me. "I was very angry at Mike. And I thought he was doing permanent damage to liberalism." Frank insists that Ackerman did not cost Dukakis the primary, but he remains troubled by his misjudgment in the race.

Two years later, in 1980, Pope John Paul II instructed priests to withdraw from electoral politics, and Father Robert Drinan, at that time the congressman representing Massachusetts's Fourth District, complied by not running for reëlection. Frank, with Drinan's endorsement, easily won the general election. (Afterward, Frank joked about papal infallibility.) In 1982, Dukakis defeated King in a rematch and served two more terms as governor. He said that he had no hard feelings for Frank. "He has always been a strong progressive force around here," Dukakis said. "He's a guy who still represents me in Congress and does so very well."

Frank's role in crafting the government's response to the current economic crisis suggests both the promise and the limitations of his pragmatic liberalism. On the evening of Thursday, September 18th, during one of the most tumultuous weeks in American economic history, Frank was summoned to an emergency meeting in the office of Nancy Pelosi. That Monday, the federal government had declined to intercede as Lehman Brothers, the investment-banking firm, declared bankruptcy. But the following day the Federal Reserve provided American International Group, the insurance company, with a bailout worth eighty-five billion dollars, to prevent it from going out of business. Many in Congress viewed these developments with alarm.

"On that Thursday afternoon, I was meeting with my leadership, and I realized I had not heard from Hank Paulson"—the Treasury Secretary—"that day about the markets," Pelosi told me. "So, because the situation was looking chaotic, I called Hank and said I wanted him to come in the following morning at 9 A.M. with Ben Bernanke"—the chairman of the Federal Reserve—"to brief me and the whole Democratic leadership. I reached him at about 3 P.M., and he said tomorrow morning might be too late. He had to come by that night."

Pelosi asked Frank and a bipartisan group of senators and representatives to meet with the Administration officials in her office. "That evening, when we met with them, they painted a very dismal picture," Pelosi continued. "They said if we don't act now we may not have an economy on Monday night." Paulson proposed that Congress authorize the Treasury Department to buy large amounts of the so-called toxic assets—mostly mortgage-backed securities—from financial-services companies that were on the brink of collapse. "We kept asking them, 'Why do you want to buy these assets?' " Pelosi said. " 'Why not just buy their stock to recapitalize them?' They just said this was their break-the-glass project—'In case of emergency, break glass.' It was waiting in the wings, and they wanted to use it. Harry Reid"—the Senate Majority Leader—"kept asking how much it would cost, and Paulson wouldn't commit to a number."

Frank laid out the provisions that the Democrats wanted in a bailout bill: equity for the taxpayers, like any other investors; a program to limit foreclosures for beleaguered homeowners; compensation reform for executives at companies receiving bailout funds; and strict congressional oversight of the whole process. Two days later, on Saturday, September 20th, the Treasury Department sent Congress a formal proposal of sorts. In a text just three pages long, the Treasury asked for seven hundred billion dollars from Congress but provided few details about how the Administration would spend the money. "It was just ridiculous," Pelosi told me. "They wanted us to surrender all authority and give them seven hundred billion dollars."

AT THE RIVER

One night that summer my mother decided it was time to tell me about
what she referred to as *pleasure*, though you could see she felt
some sort of unease about this ceremony, which she tried to cover up
by first taking my hand, as though somebody in the family had just died—
she went on holding my hand as she made her speech
which was more like a speech about mechanical engineering
than a conversation about pleasure. In her other hand
she had a book from which, apparently, she'd taken the main facts.
She did the same thing with the others, my two brothers and sister,
and the book was always the same book, dark blue,
though we each got our own copy.

There was a line drawing on the cover
showing a man and woman holding hands
but standing fairly far apart, like people on two sides of a dirt road.

Obviously, she and my father did not have a language for what they did
which, from what I could judge, wasn't pleasure.
At the same time, whatever holds human beings together
could hardly resemble those cool black-and-white diagrams, which suggested,
among other things, that you could only achieve pleasure
with a person of the opposite sex,
so you didn't get two sockets, say, and no plug.

School wasn't in session.
I went back to my room and shut the door
and my mother went into the kitchen
where my father was pouring glasses of wine for himself and his invisible guest
who—surprise—doesn't appear.
No, it's just my father and his friend the Holy Ghost
partying the night away until the bottle runs out,
after which my father continues sitting at the table
with an open book in front of him.

Tactfully, so as not to embarrass the Spirit,
my father handled all the glasses,
first his own, then the other, back and forth like every other night.

By then, I was out of the house.
It was summer; my friends used to meet at the river.
The whole thing seemed a grave embarrassment

although the truth was that, except for the boys, maybe we didn't understand mechanics.
The boys had the key right in front of them, in their hands if they wanted,
and many of them said they'd already used it,
though once one boy said this, the others said it too,
and of course people had older brothers and sisters.

We sat at the edge of the river discussing parents in general
and sex in particular. And a lot of information got shared,
and of course the subject was unfailingly interesting.
I showed people my book, *Ideal Marriage*—we all had a good laugh over it.
One night a boy brought a bottle of wine and we passed it around for a while.

More and more that summer we understood
that something was going to happen to us
that would change us.
And the group, all of us who used to meet this way,
the group would shatter, like a shell that falls away
so the bird can emerge.
Only of course it would be two birds emerging, pairs of birds.

We sat in the reeds at the edge of the river
throwing small stones. When the stones hit,
you could see the stars multiply for a second, little explosions of light
flashing and going out. There was a boy I was beginning to like,
not to speak to but to watch.
I liked to sit behind him to study the back of his neck.

And after a while we'd all get up together and walk back through the dark
to the village. Above the field, the sky was clear,
stars everywhere, like in the river, though these were the real stars,
even the dead ones were real.

But the ones in the river—
they were like having some idea that explodes suddenly into a thousand ideas,
not real, maybe, but somehow more lifelike.

When I got home, my mother was asleep, my father was still at the table,
reading his book. And I said, Did your friend go away?
And he looked at me intently for a while,
then he said, Your mother and I used to drink a glass of wine together
after dinner.

—*Louise Glück*

Throughout the weekend, Frank and Chris Dodd, the Democratic senator from Connecticut and the chairman of the Senate banking committee, worked with colleagues in both parties to come up with a plan that they thought could win widespread support. The following Wednesday, September 24th, John McCain, the Republican Presidential nominee, announced that he was suspending his campaign and returning to Washington to address the crisis. Although McCain had played no part in the negotiations, the White House promptly scheduled a meeting of the President, the congressional leadership, and the two Presidential candidates for the following afternoon, Thursday, September 25th. By this time, a deal seemed to be in place. Congressional leaders announced that they had agreed in principle to an amended version of the Administration's bailout proposal. Before the meeting, the Democrats at the White House, including Frank, Pelosi, and Barack Obama, had caucused privately in the Roosevelt Room about their strategy for the day. "Barack said, 'I think we need to go ahead with this,' " Frank recalled. "He was being conciliatory, because he thinks it's very important for us, both in public policy and politically, that we don't get blamed for fucking up the economy. And that we not fuck up the economy."

The meeting with the President nearly destroyed the good will that had been generated during the previous week. John Boehner, the Republican leader in the House, expressed disapproval of the proposal, arguing that it did not reflect a bipartisan consensus. Frank tried to put McCain on the spot: would he back the House Republicans or Bush and the rest of the congressional leadership? As Frank recalled, "I said, 'John, what do you think?' 'Well, I think the House Republicans have a right to their position.' 'Fine. You agree with that position?' 'No, I just think they have a right to their position.' He looks like your old uncle, just shrivelled and shrunk, and he just didn't look good. And we kept pressing him, saying, 'What is your plan?' " McCain wouldn't say.

"The protocol is you're not supposed to talk to the President directly," Frank said. "We just ignored that." But the President didn't bring the group together, and the meeting ended without a decision. The Democrats returned to the Roosevelt Room to plot their next move, and Paulson joined them. As Frank recalled, Paulson "literally drops to the one knee" and begged Pelosi to bring the bailout up for a vote in the House, despite the Republican opposition. "But we start yelling at him," Frank said. " 'Jeez, work on your assholes over there—your guys. I mean, you know, we're trying to do it, and your guys are playing games.' "

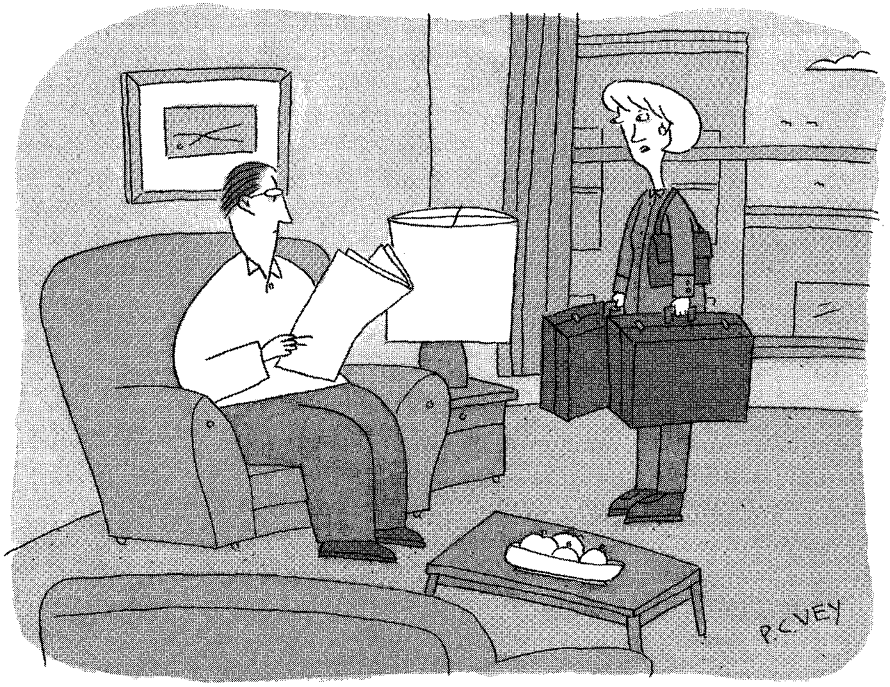
Two tumultuous votes in the House followed. On September 29th, the bailout was unexpectedly defeated, 228–205, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged seven hundred and seventy-eight points. Congressional leaders and Administration officials made small, mostly cosmetic changes to the bill and, citing the turmoil in the stock market, urged their colleagues to support the measure. On October 3rd, the revised bill passed the

House, 263–171. What Frank and the other sponsors of the bailout actually accomplished, however, remains uncertain.

It appears that Frank failed to achieve three of his four initial objectives. The Treasury Department eventually did make direct investments in financial-services firms, but the bill includes few meaningful restrictions on executive compensation, and the oversight provision will likely have only a modest influence on how the bailout money is distributed and spent.

One of Frank's primary goals for the bailout—providing assistance to homeowners to avoid foreclosures—remains unrealized, even though the Treasury Department has already allocated half of the seven hundred billion dollars. On November 20th, Frank wrote a letter to Paulson, "to urge you in the strongest possible terms to use [bailout] funds to support significant steps that can help stem the tidal wave of foreclosures threatening the stability of our financial system and our economy." He has held committee hearings to praise banks like J. P. Morgan Chase and Bank of America, which have instituted programs to modify the terms of some mortgages. He has urged support for a proposal by Sheila Bair, the chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, to enable homeowners to renegotiate mortgages and, potentially, prevent an estimated one and a half million foreclosures this year.

Frank defends the bailout legislation. "Sure, this sucks," he told me, "but if it wasn't for what we did, it would suck worse. We were looking at the possibility of a global economic collapse, and that didn't happen. We are better off than if we hadn't passed it." I asked him whether he thought his efforts to force the Administration to modify the bailout, especially on foreclosures, were having any effect. "Jack Newfield, while writing for the *Voice* under Lindsay, said he didn't have any governmental power—he had the power to make the dinner parties of the Lindsay-administration officials unpleasant," Frank replied. "That was his pressure point. That's part of it. You know, no one, almost no one, is totally indifferent to public opinion. So you have hearings to pressure people. People don't like to be embarrassed. You have hearings to send messages. So they can have an impact. Sometimes they're a waste of time. And you can get too diffused. But I think these hearings had some impact." At the moment, Frank can claim that he played a significant role in creating a tenuous lifeline for banks and other institutions (many of which have yet to resume normal lending), while encouraging the federal government to provide some assistance to terrified homeowners (which may not happen).

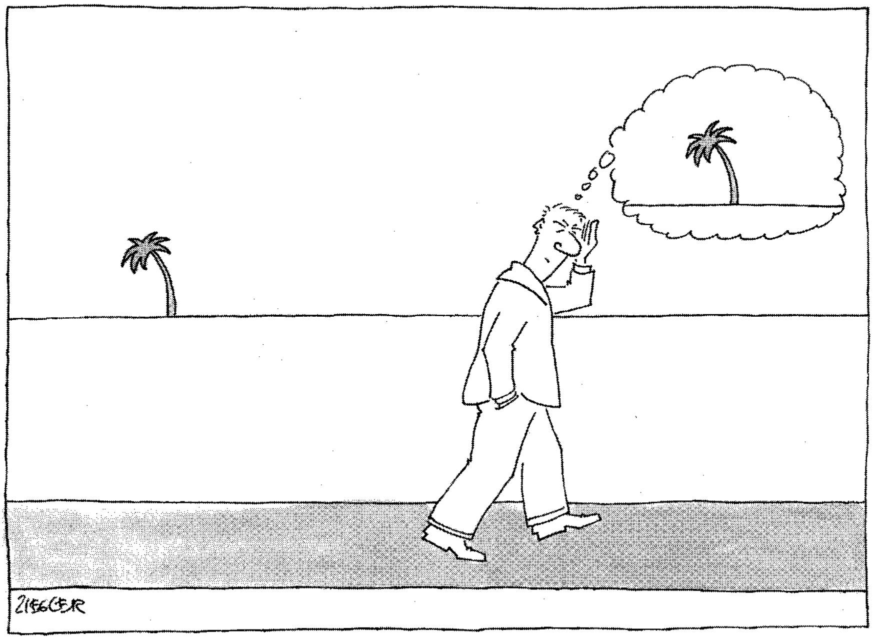


"I would have left a long time ago, but I could never find luggage I really liked."

In November, Pelosi asked Frank to lead the effort in the House to pass another bailout, for the Big Three American carmakers. On the morning of December 5th, the day that Frank had summoned the chief executives of General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler to testify before his committee, the government reported that the unemployment rate had jumped from 6.5 per cent to 6.7 per cent in a single month. Frank used that news to inject a note of drama into his opening statement. "Context is especially important this morning," he said. "A failure, to some extent, of three of our major domestic manufacturing entities would be a very serious problem in any case. In the midst of the worst economic situation since the Great Depression, it would be an unmitigated disaster." Opposition from Senate Republicans prevented legislation to rescue the automakers from coming up for a vote. On December 19th, President Bush used his executive authority to offer $13.4 billion in loans from the federal bailout fund to General Motors and Chrysler, which appeared to be enough to enable the companies to survive for a few months—until the new Congress and the Obama Administration devise a long-term recovery plan. "I think what Bush did was right," Frank told me. "He kept the companies alive until Obama takes over."

In 1986, Frank approached Tip O'Neill on the House floor to tell him that a forthcoming book would refer to Frank as a gay man. "He said, 'Oh, Barney, don't listen to that crap,'" Frank recalled. "They say stuff like that about all of us.' I said, 'Well, Tip, it's true.' And he sort of slumped in his chair and said, 'Oh, Barney, I'm so sad. I thought you might be the first Jewish Speaker.'" (O'Neill, who had little facility for contemporary slang, prepared his staffers by saying that Frank had decided to "come out of the room.") Two decades later, Frank's ascendancy in Congress suggests that O'Neill had too little faith in Frank—and in the ability of the country to change.

Frank's work as a committee chairman absorbs virtually all his time, but he



KUDOS TO MYSELF AS I SCORE ONCE AGAIN AN A-PLUS ON THE LATEST CHALLENGE TO MY PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY.

is also, unofficially, the congressman for gay America. "I remember when I first came to Congress, twenty-one years ago," Nancy Pelosi told me. "And I heard a congressman, William Dannemeyer, on the floor, saying the most hateful things about AIDS and gay people. It was regular fare at the time. I just didn't get it. And I called Barney to see what we could do about it. And he said, 'Why are you calling me? Go down there and challenge him!' "

Frank remains a sporadic target for anti-gay-rights groups. In the 2006 campaign, John Hostettler, a Republican congressman from Indiana, ran a radio ad that said, "Pelosi will then put in motion her radical plan to advance the homosexual agenda, led by Barney Frank, reprimanded by the House after paying for sex with a man who ran a gay brothel out of Congressman Frank's home." (In 1990, the House Ethics Committee rejected the charge that Frank knew about the prostitution ring, which was for straight men.) Asked about his gay agenda, Frank says, "I do not think that any self-respecting radical in history would have considered advocating people's rights to get married, join the Army, and earn a living as a terribly inspiring revolutionary platform." (Hostettler lost the 2006 race.)

Frank's mordant view of human nature presents a contrast to the sunnier approach of President-elect Obama, a difference reflected in their dispute over Obama's choice to have Rick Warren, the evangelical pastor, give the invocation at the Inauguration. "Obama tends to overstate his ability to get people to change their opinions and underestimates the importance of confronting ideological differences," Frank told me. "It's one thing to talk to somebody. I talk to more conservatives than anyone, because I'm trying to get legislation passed. But it's another to make Rick Warren the most honored clergyman in the world." In California, Warren supported Proposition 8, the successful anti-gay-marriage referendum. "Now, when we fight Warren in California, we are going to hear, 'Oh, yeah, but Obama picked him for the inaugural.' He doesn't deserve that honor. And I don't want to hear that the other clergyman at the inaugural, Reverend [Joseph] Lowery, supports gay rights. I didn't vote for a tie in the election."

Frank worries that Obama's even-handedness may prove to be a political liability. "On the financial crisis, Obama said that both sides were asleep at the switch," Frank said. "But that's not true. The Republicans were wide awake, and they made choices to oppose regulation. They had bad ideas. He says, 'I don't want to fight the fights of the nineties,' but I don't see any alternative to refighting the fights of the nineties if we want to change things."

Still, Frank is uncharacteristically hopeful about the future, including gay rights. "We're going to do three things in Congress," he told me. "First, a hate-crimes bill—that shouldn't be too hard. Next, employment discrimination. We almost got that through before, but now we can win even if we add transgender protections, which we are going to do. And finally, after the troops get home from Iraq, gays in the military. The time has come."

To Frank, the future looks bright even for the economy. In 2009, he predicts, the federal government will take steps to stop some foreclosures, and produce a stimulus package that will reinvigorate the economy. "It will all work together, and it will work," he said. "Obama's almost lucky. He can do all these things on the economy, and both the real and psychological effect of what he's doing is going to kick in soon after he takes office. And the recovery is going to start about six months before the 2010 elections. That's pretty good."

In 2004, when it appeared that John Kerry might win the Presidency, Frank prepared to run for Kerry's Senate seat. But Frank's age and the committee chairmanship suggest that he is likely to remain where he is. In October, he began holding hearings on how to transform the laws that govern banks and financial-services companies, with the goal of reforming the system so that the current crisis will not recur. "We are at a moment now when liberalism is poised to have its biggest impact on America since Roosevelt, because the conservative viewpoint has been so thoroughly repudiated by reality," Frank said. "Someone asked Harold Macmillan what has the most impact on political decisions. He said, 'Events, dear boy, events.' Events have just totally repudiated them, and we're now in a position to take advantage of that." He went on, "You know Hegel. Thesis: No regulation at all. Antithesis: Now the government owns the banks. What I gotta do next year is the synthesis." ♦

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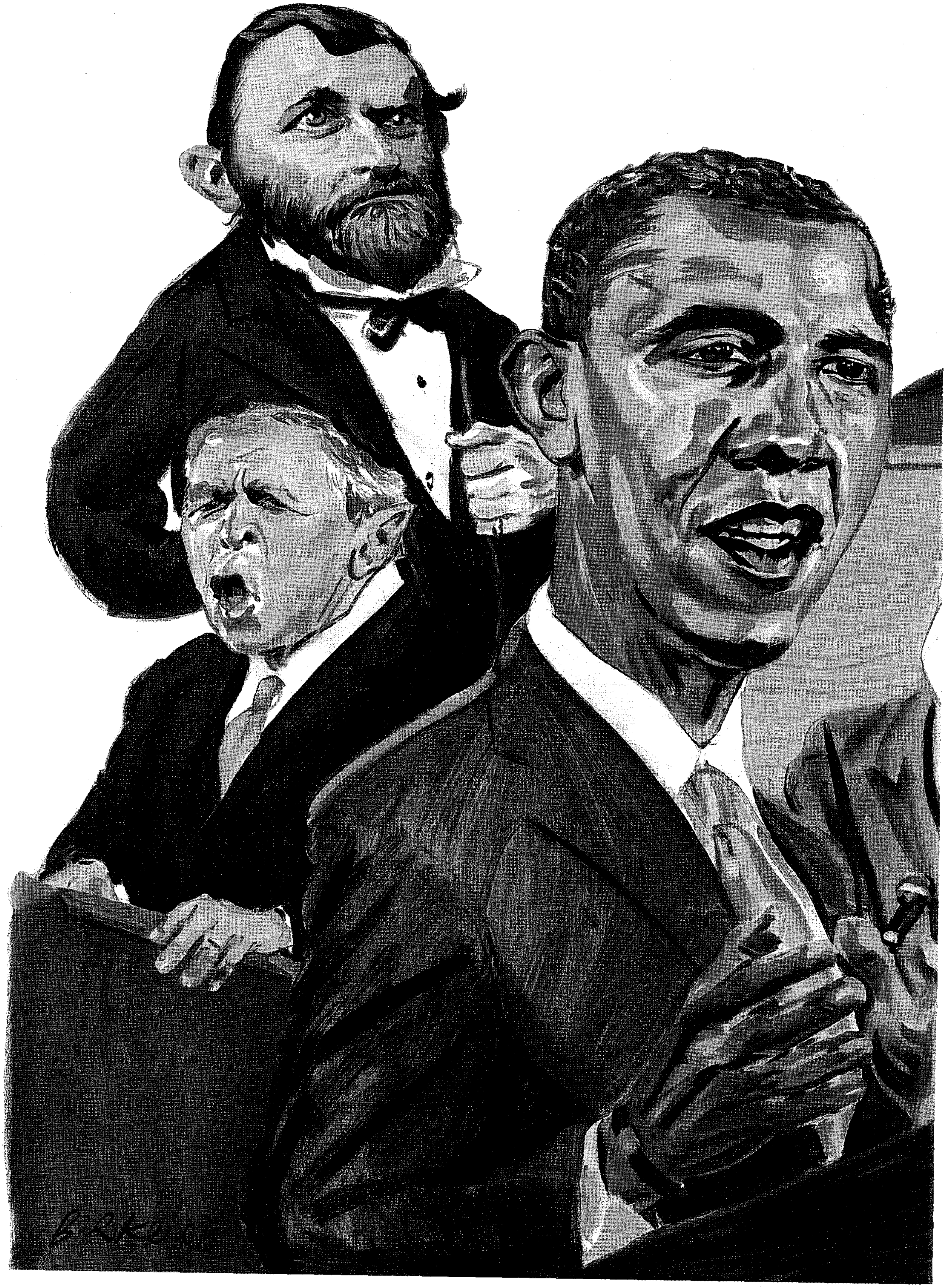
Jeffrey Toobin answers readers' questions.



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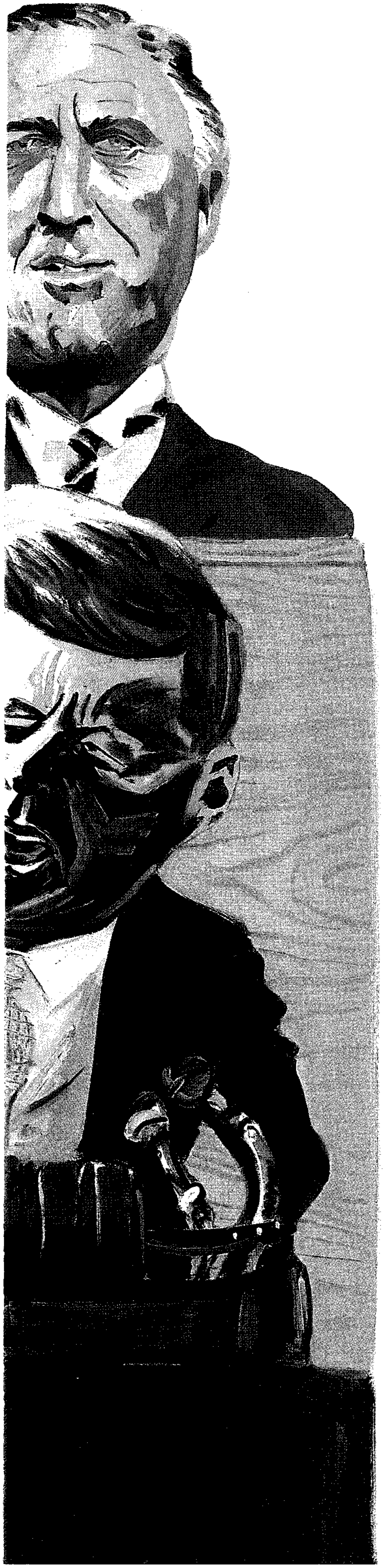


ANNALS OF THE PRESIDENCY

THE SPEECH

Have Inaugural Addresses been getting worse?

BY JILL LEPORE

Barack Obama has been studying up, reading Abraham Lincoln's speeches, raising everyone's expectations for what just might be the most eagerly awaited Inaugural Address ever. Presidential eloquence doesn't get much better than the argument of Lincoln's first inaugural, "Plainly the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy"; the poetry of his second, "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away"; and its parting grace, "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in."

Reading Lincoln left James Garfield nearly speechless. After Garfield was elected, in 1880, he, like most of our more bookish Chief Executives, or at least their speechwriters, undertook to read the Inaugural Addresses of every President who preceded him. "Those of the past except Lincoln's, are dreary reading," Garfield confided to his diary. "I have half a mind to make none." Lincoln's are surpassingly fine; most of the rest are utterly unlovely. The longest are, unsurprisingly, the most vacuous; it usually takes a while to say so prodigiously little. "Make it the shortest since T.R.," John F. Kennedy urged Ted Sorensen, who, on finishing his own reading, reported, "Lincoln never used a two- or three-syllable word where a one-syllable word would do." Sorensen and Kennedy applied that rule to the writing of Kennedy's inaugural, not just the "Ask not" but also the "call to": "Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are—but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle."

Economy isn't everything. "Only the short ones are remembered," Richard Nixon concluded, after reading all the inaugurals, an opinion that led him to say things briefly but didn't save him from saying them badly: "The American dream does not come to those who fall asleep." Even when Presidential inaugurals make more sense than that, they are not, on the whole, gripping. "The platitude quotient tends to be high, the rhetoric stately and self-serving, the ritual obsessive, and the surprises few," Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., observed in 1965, and that's still true. A bad Inaugural Address doesn't always augur a bad Presidency. It sinks your spirit, though. In 1857, James Buchanan berated abolitionists for making such a fuss about slavery: "Most happy will it be for the country when the public mind shall be diverted from this question to others of more pressing and practical importance." Ulysses S. Grant groused, "I have been the subject of abuse and slander scarcely ever equaled in political history." Dwight D. Eisenhower went for a numbered list. George H. W. Bush compared freedom to a kite. For meaninglessness, my money's on Jimmy Carter: "It is that unique self-definition which has given us an exceptional appeal, but it also imposes on us a special obligation to take on those moral duties which, when assumed, seem invariably to be in our own best interests." But, for monotony, it's difficult to outdrone Warren G. Harding ("It is so bad that a sort of grandeur creeps into it," H. L. Mencken admitted): "I speak for administrative efficiency, for lightened tax burdens, for sound commercial practices, for adequate credit facilities, for sympathetic concern for all agricultural problems, for the omission of unnecessary interference of . . ." I ellipse, lest I nod off. The American dream does not come to those who fall asleep.

When Garfield was elected, there were fewer inaugurals to plow through, but they were harder to come by. Obama might not be allowed to e-mail, but he can still Google. Sorensen, who mimeographed, had merely to walk over to the Library of Congress. Garfield's staff had to hunt down every inaugural, and any copying

Inaugurals used to invoke the Constitution; now they appeal directly to the people.

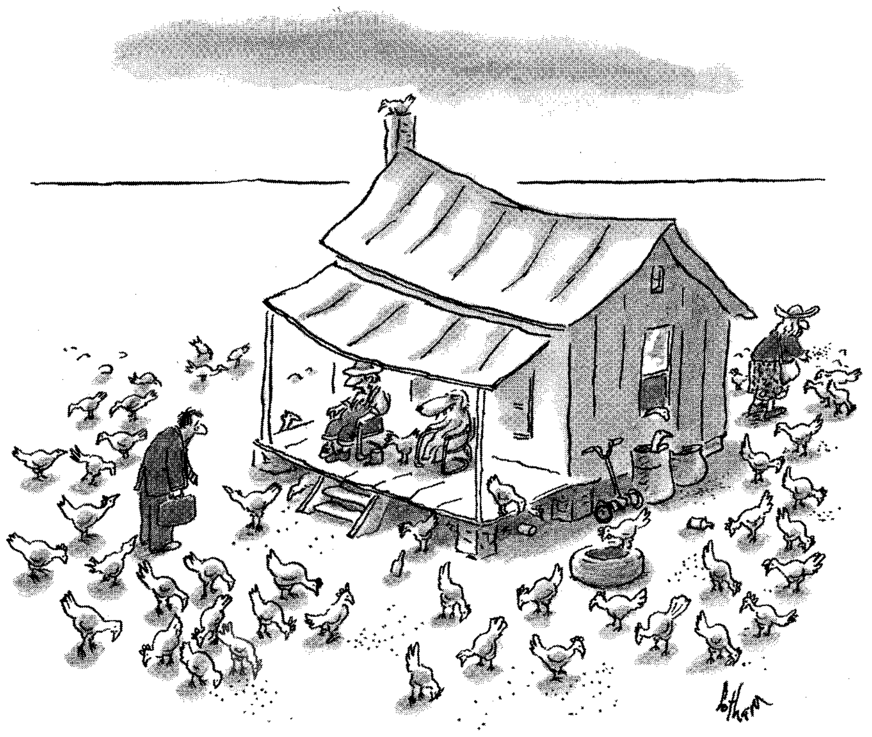
they did they did by hand. The inaugurals weren't regularly compiled and printed as a set until 1840, in "The True American," and, six years later, in "The Statesman's Manual," but by 1880 no edition remained in print, and Garfield's men had to cobble them together all over again. Since 1893, a complete set of texts has been reissued every few decades or so, including, this past year, in "Fellow Citizens: The Penguin Book of U.S. Presidential Inaugural Addresses" (Penguin; $16), edited, with an introduction and commentaries, by Robert V. Remini and Terry Golway.

Inaugural Addresses were written to be read as much as heard. Arguably, they still are. The first thirty-three of our country's Inaugural Addresses survive only as written words. Before 1921, when Warren Harding used an amplifier, even the crowd couldn't make out what the President was saying, and before Calvin Coolidge's speech was broadcast over the radio, in 1925, the inaugurals were, basically, *only* read, usually in the newspaper. Since Truman's, in 1949, inaugurals have been televised, and since Bill Clinton's second, in 1997, they have been streamed online. Obama's inaugural, the fifty-sixth in American history, will be the first to be YouTubed. "Our Founders saw themselves in the light of posterity," Clinton said. "We can do no less." Inaugurals are written for the future, but they look, mostly, to the past ("We are the heirs of the ages," T.R. said), which, when you think about it, might help explain why so many prove so unsatisfying in the present. ("*Achieve timelessness!*" is, as a piece of writing advice, probably not the most helpful.) On January 20th, most of us will watch and listen. Delivery counts. But, for now at least, speaking to posterity still means writing for readers. Bedside reading old inaugurals are not. But they do offer some hints about what will be at stake when Barack Obama raises his hands, quiets the crowd, and clears his throat.

"Made the first actual study for inaugural by commencing to read those of my predecessors," Garfield wrote in his diary on December 20, 1880, when he still had plenty of time. (New Presidents used to be sworn in on March 4th. In 1933, the Twentieth Amendment changed the date to January 20th, to shorten the awkward interregnum between election and Inauguration.) He started with George Washington's first (the oldest) and second (at a hundred and thirty-five words, the shortest). The next day, he read John Adams's overworked and forgettable one and only: "His next to the last sentence contains more than 700 words. Strong but too cumbrous." (Actually, Garfield was wrong; it's the third-to-last sentence. But it is cumbrous. Also, indefinite: nineteen of those seven hundred words are "if.") That afternoon, Garfield listened as a friend read aloud Thomas Jefferson's first, probably more forcefully than had Jefferson, who was, famously, a mumbler. "Stronger than Washington's, more ornate than Adams' " was the President-elect's verdict on the address, widely considered nearly as transcendent as Lincoln's two, for these lines: "Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists." But it's the next, if admittedly more ornate, sentence that steals my breath: "If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."

On December 22nd, Garfield trudged through a few more lesser addresses: "Curious tone of self-depreciation runs through them all—which I cannot quite believe was genuine. Madison's speeches were not quite up to my expectations. Monroe's first was rather above." And then, what with Christmas, trips to the dentist, and choosing a Cabinet, Garfield found his interest in reading inaugurals flagging. Instead, he devoured a novel, hot off the presses—Disraeli's three-volume, autobiographical "Endymion." He finished it on New Year's Eve, just weeks after he started it, and concluded in his diary, twenty minutes before midnight, "It shows adroitness, great reserve on dangerous questions, with enough frankness on other questions to make a show of boldness." Even that much he could not say for the inaugurals stretching from John Quincy Adams (who wore pants instead of knee breeches) to Buchanan (a man Kennedy once aptly described as "cringing in the White House, afraid to move," while the nation teetered on the brink of civil war). By mid-January, Garfield's staff had entered summaries of the inaugurals into a book for him to read. But, abridged or unabridged, they were a slog. Did he really have to write one? He wasn't so sure: "I am quite seriously discussing the propriety of omitting it."

He could have. The Constitution says nothing about an Inaugural Address. It calls only for the President to take an oath: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of



"Hello, son. I suppose chicken farming doesn't seem so bad now."

President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." George Washington took that oath in New York City, on April 30, 1789 (the election hadn't been concluded until mid-April). Just hours before the ceremony, a special congressional committee decided that it might be fitting for Washington to rest his hand on a Bible, and, since no one in Federal Hall had a copy, there followed a mad dash to find one. At midday, Washington took his oath standing on a balcony above a crowd assembled on Wall Street. Then he kissed his borrowed Bible and uttered four words more: "So help me, God." Ever since, most Presidents have done the same, but some have dispensed with the kiss, a few have skipped those four words, and, in 1853, Franklin Pierce even refused the Bible.

After Washington was sworn in, he entered Federal Hall and made a speech before Congress. He didn't have to. He thought it would be a good idea. Like most things Washington did, this set a precedent. Washington's first inaugural was addressed to "Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and the House of Representatives." He wasn't speaking to the American people; he was speaking to Congress. In 1801, Jefferson, the first President to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C., the nation's new capital, addressed his remarks to the American people—"Friends and Fellow-Citizens"—but, the day he delivered it, he, too, was really speaking only to Congress and assorted dignitaries, assembled in the half-built Capitol. James Monroe, in 1817, was the first to deliver his inaugural in the open air (before a crowd of eight thousand, who couldn't hear a thing), although this came about only because the Capitol was undergoing renovations and House members refused to share a chamber with the senators. In 1829, some twenty thousand Americans turned up for Andrew Jackson's Inauguration. Jackson, who had campaigned as a common man, addressed his inaugural to the American people, and that's how it has been done ever since. Talking to the American people proved to be the death of William Henry Harrison, who, on a bitterly cold and icy day in 1841, became, at sixty-eight, the oldest President then to have taken office. Determined to prove his hardiness, Harrison delivered his address hatless and without so much as an overcoat. "In obedience to a custom coeval with our Government and what I believe to be your expectations I proceed to present to you a summary of the principles which will govern me in the discharge of the duties which I shall be called upon to perform," Harrison said, introducing a speech that, far from being a summary, took more than two hours to deliver, and, at more than eight thousand words, still reigns as the longest. Harrison caught a cold that day; it worsened into pneumonia; he died a month later.

"I must soon begin the inaugural address," Garfield scolded himself in his diary on January 25, 1881. He had finished his dreary reading. There was no real avoiding the writing. "I suppose I must conform to the custom, but I think the address should be short." Three days later, he reported, "I made some progress in my inaugural, but do not satisfy myself. The fact is I ought to have done it sooner before I became so jaded."

George Washington wasn't jaded, but he struggled, too. Possibly with the help of David Humphreys, he wrote the better part of a first draft, seventy-three pages of policy recommendations. Eager to assure Americans that he had not the least intention of founding a dynasty, he reminded Congress that he couldn't: "the Divine providence hath not seen fit that my blood should be transmitted or my name perpetuated by the endearing though sometimes seducing, channel of personal offspring." James Madison judiciously deleted that. Jackson made a stab at a draft, but his advisers, calling it "disgraceful," rewrote it entirely. After reading a draft of William Henry Harrison's inaugural, cluttered with references to ancient republics, Daniel Webster pared it down, and declared when he was done, "I have killed seventeen Roman pro-consuls as dead as smelts."

Lincoln gave a draft of his first inaugural to his incoming Secretary of State, William Seward, who scribbled out a new ending, offering an olive branch to seceding Southern states:

> I close. We are not, we must not be, aliens or enemies, but fellow-countrymen and brethren. Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly, they must not, I am sure they will not, be broken. The mystic chords which, proceeding from so many battle-fields and so many patriot graves, pass through all the hearts and all the hearths in this broad continent of ours, will yet harmonize in their ancient music when breathed upon by the guardian angels of the nation.

But it was Lincoln's revision that made this soar:

> I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Revision usually helps. Raymond Moley drafted Franklin Roosevelt's first inaugural, but Louis Howe added, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Sorensen wrote much of Kennedy's, but it was Adlai Stevenson and John Kenneth Galbraith who proposed an early version of "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate." Carter, who had a vexed relationship with speechwriters, wrote his own unmemorable inaugural, although James Fallows managed to persuade him to open by thanking Gerald Ford. In "White House Ghosts: Presidents and Their Speechwriters" (Simon & Schuster; $30), Robert Schlesinger argues that Ronald Reagan gave, in the course of his career, iterations of what was essentially the same talk, known as the Speech. His inaugural, remarkable for its skilled delivery, was no exception. Clinton solicited advice from dozens of people, including Sorensen, and then tinkered. About her husband, Hillary Clinton once said, "He's never met a sentence he couldn't fool with."

James Garfield wrote his inaugural alone. "I must shut myself up to the study of man's estimate of himself as contrasted with my own estimate of him," he vowed, with much misgiving, in mid-January. "Made some progress on the inaugural," he reported a few weeks later, "but still feel unusual repugnance to writing." At least he had settled on an outline: "1st a brief introduction, 2nd a summary of recent topics that ought to be treated as settled, 3rd a summary of those that ought to occupy the public attention, 4[th] a direct appeal to the people to stand by me in an independent and vigorous execution of the laws." In "Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words" (Chicago; $25), Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and

Kathleen Hall Jamieson argue that inaugural rhetoric serves four purposes: reuniting the people after an election; rehearsing shared and inherited values; setting forth policies; and demonstrating the President's willingness to abide by the terms of his office. That list happens to be a near-match to Garfield's outline. But it misses what has changed about inaugurals over the years, and what was newish about Garfield's. The nation's first century of inaugural speeches, even when they were addressed to the people, served to mark an incoming President's covenant with the Constitution. As the political scientist Jeffrey Tulis pointed out in his 1987 study, "The Rhetorical Presidency," every nineteenth-century inaugural except Zachary Taylor's mentions the Constitution. John Quincy Adams called that document our "precious inheritance." To Martin Van Buren, it was "a sacred instrument." James K. Polk called it "the chart by which I shall be directed." Most do more than mention the Constitution; they linger over it. A few nineteenth-century inaugurals, including William Henry Harrison's, consist of ponderous constitutional analysis. Meanwhile, only half the inaugurals delivered in the twentieth century contain the word "Constitution," and none do much more than name it. Nineteenth-century Presidents pledged themselves to the Constitution; twentieth-century Presidents courted the American people.

We now not only accept that our Presidents will speak to us, directly, and ask for our support, plebiscitarily; we expect it, even though the founders not only didn't expect it, they feared it. Tulis and other scholars who wrote on this subject during the Reagan years generally found the rise of the rhetorical Presidency alarming. By appealing to the people, charismatic Chief Executives were bypassing Congress and ignoring the warnings of—and the provisions made by—the Founding Fathers, who considered popular leaders to be demagogues, politicians who appealed to passion rather than to reason. The rhetorical Presidency, Tulis warned, was leading to "a greater mutability of policy, an erosion of the processes of deliberation, and a decay of political discourse."

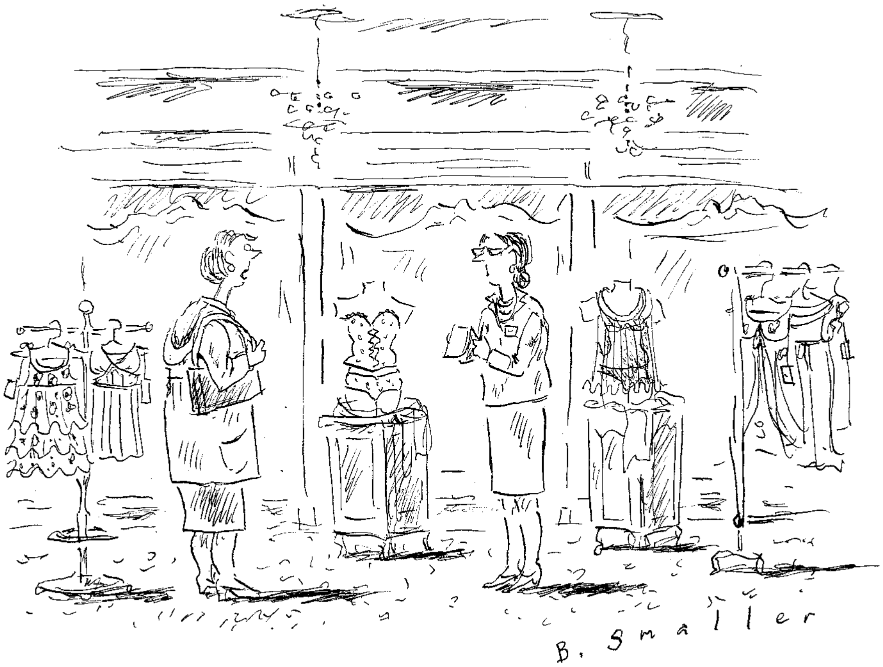
In the years since, that prediction has largely been borne out. Still, scholars have quibbled about Tulis's theory. In the latest corrective, "The Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush" (Oxford; $24.95), the political scientist Elvin T. Lim argues that the problem isn't that Presidents appeal to the people; it's that they pander to us. Speech is fine; blather is not. By an "anti-intellectual President"—a nod to Richard Hofstadter's "Anti-Intellectualism in American Life," from 1963—Lim doesn't just mean George W. Bush, though Bush's government-by-the-gut is a good illustration of his point. He means everyone from Harding forward (except for T.R., Wilson, F.D.R., and J.F.K., who, while rhetorical Presidents, were not, by Lim's accounting, anti-intellectual ones), a procession of Presidents who have, in place of evidence and argument, offered platitudes, partisan gibes, emotional appeals, and lady-in-Pasadena human-interest stories. Sloganeering in speechwriting has become such a commonplace that this year the National Constitution Center is hosting a contest for the best six-word inaugural. ("New deal. New day. New world.") Public-spirited, yes; nuanced, not so much.

Lim dates the institutionalization of the anti-intellectual Presidency to 1969, when Nixon established the Writing and Research Department, the first White House speechwriting office. There had been speechwriters before, but they were usually also policy advisers. With Nixon's Administration was born a class of professionals whose sole job was to write the President's speeches, and who have been rewarded, in the main, for the amount of applause their prose could generate. Of F.D.R.'s speeches, only about one a year was interrupted for applause (and no one applauded when he said that fear is all we have to fear). Bill Clinton's last State of the Union address was interrupted a hundred and twenty times. The dispiriting transcript reads, "I ask you to pass a real patients' bill of rights. [Applause.] I ask you to pass common sense gun safety legislation. [Applause.] I ask you to pass campaign finance reform. [Applause.]" For every minute of George W. Bush's State of the Union addresses, there were twenty-nine seconds of applause.

Lim interviewed forty-two current and former White House speechwriters. But much of his analysis rests on running inaugurals and other Presidential messages through something called the Flesch Readability Test, a formula involving the average number of words in a sentence and the average number of syllables per word. Flesch scores, when indexed to grade levels, rate the New York *Times* at college level; *Newsweek* at high school; and comic books at fifth grade. Between 1789 and 2005, the Flesch scores of Inaugural Addresses descended from a college reading level to about an eighth-grade one. Lim takes this to mean that Inaugural Addresses are getting stupider. That's not clear. They've always been lousy. Admittedly, the older speeches are, as Garfield put it, cumbrous, but it's a mistake to assume that something's smarter just because it's harder to read. This essay, with the exception of the sentence after this one, gets an eleventh-grade rating. However, were circumstances such that a disquisition on Presidential eloquence were to proffer, to a more loquacious narrator—one whose style and syntax were characterized by rhetorical flourishes which, to modern ears, might, indeed, give every appearance of being at once extraordinary and antiquated, and, yet more particularly, obnoxious—were, that is, this composition to present to such a penman a propitious opportunity for maundering, not to say for circumlocution, that tireless soul would be compensated, if a dubious reward it would prove, by a Flesch score more collegial, nay: this extracted digression rates "doctoral." It is, nevertheless, malarkey. Flesch scores turn out to be not such a useful measure of meaningfulness, especially across time. Still, Lim is onto something. The American language has changed. Inaugural Addresses can be lousy in a whole new idiom. The past half century of speechwriters, most of whom trained as journalists, do favor small words and short sentences, as do many people whose English teachers made them read Strunk and White's 1959 "Elements of Style" ("Omit needless words") and Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language" ("Never use a long word where a short one will do"). Lim gets this, but only sort of. Harding's inaugural comes in at a college reading level, George H. W.

Bush's at about a sixth-grade level. Harding's isn't smarter or subtler; it's just more flowery. They are both empty-headed; both suffer from what Orwell called "slovenliness." The problem doesn't lie in the length of their sentences or the number of their syllables. It lies in the absence of precision, the paucity of ideas, and the evasion of every species of argument.

Presidential rhetoric is worth keeping an eye on. But the anti-intellectual Presidency is fast expiring. And a rhetorical Presidency begins to look a lot better, after some years of a dumbfounded one.



"I'm looking for something that says I have a headache."

Three days before his Inauguration, James Garfield scrapped his entire first draft and started again. (Actually, he didn't quite scrap it; he filed it. You can read his several drafts at the Library of Congress.) He finished his speech at two-thirty in the morning, just hours before he became President (thereby beating Clinton, who put down his pen at 4:30 A.M.). He began, as almost everyone does, with a history lesson: "We can not overestimate the fervent love of liberty, the intelligent courage, and the sum of common sense with which our fathers made the great experiment of self-government." The American experiment had been Washington's theme, too. "The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government," Washington said, are, finally, "staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people." John Adams deemed this "an experiment better adapted to the genius, character, situation, and relations of this nation" than of any other. Jefferson called the American republic "the world's best hope."

Antebellum Presidents couldn't very well avoid attempting to explain the relationship between the American experiment and the peculiar institution. Van Buren acknowledged the issue of slavery as a source of "discord and disaster"; he therefore praised the founders' "forbearance" of it. William Henry Harrison urged the same: "The attempt of those of one State to control the domestic institutions of another can only result in feelings of distrust and jealousy, the certain harbingers of disunion, violence, and civil war, and the ultimate destruction of our free institutions." Pierce, sworn into office three years after the Compromise of 1850, went further: "I believe that involuntary servitude, as it exists in different States of this Confederacy, is recognized by the Constitution." Lincoln was the first to state the matter plainly: "One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute." In his extraordinary second inaugural—it's hard to think of a better speech that he, or anyone, could have given—he asked the Union to forgive the Confederacy: "It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged."

Garfield, who wrestled, alone in his study, with man's estimation of man, proved to be the first post-Civil War President to achieve anything like Lincoln's capacity for uncompromising argument married to relentless grace. "The elevation of the negro race from slavery to the full rights of citizenship is the most important political change we have known since the adoption of the Constitution," Garfield observed. And then, about the Southern suppression of the black vote, he warned, "To violate the freedom and sanctities of the suffrage is more than an evil. It is a crime which, if persisted in, will destroy the Government itself." William McKinley, in the first inaugural of the twentieth century, announced, "We are reunited. Sectionalism has disappeared." It had not. It has not. In 1909, a hundred years before Barack Obama's Inauguration, William Taft was left insisting, because so many Americans still needed reminding, "The negroes are now Americans."

There have been a lot of speeches since then, but, as Clinton said in his second inaugural, "The divide of race has been America's constant curse." Obama, in his ambitious March, 2008, speech on race, attempted to lift that curse. "America can change—that is the true genius of this nation," he declared. "This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected."

Generations ago, James Garfield did his imperfect best. The inaugural he delivered, on March 4, 1881, didn't match Lincoln's eloquence. But this year it bears rereading:

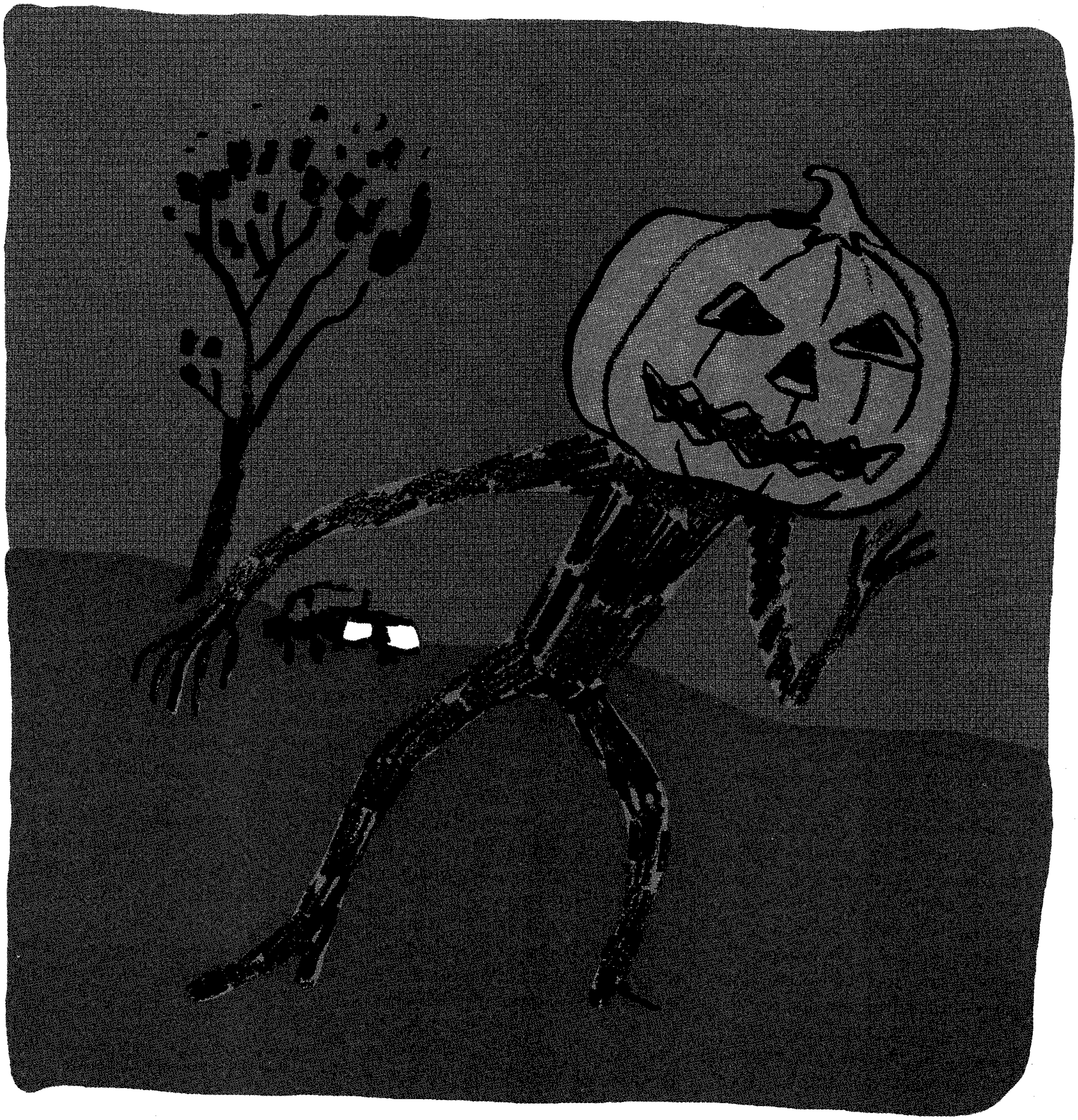
> My countrymen, we do not now differ in our judgment concerning the controversies of past generations, and fifty years hence our children will not be divided in their opinions concerning our controversies. They will surely bless their fathers and their fathers' God that the Union was preserved, that slavery was overthrown, and that both races were made equal before the law. We may hasten or we may retard, but we can not prevent, the final reconciliation.

Enough said. ♦

FICTION

PUMPKIN HEAD

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES



In late March, there'd been a sleet storm throughout north-central New Jersey. Her husband had died several days before. There was no connection, she knew. But since that time she'd begun to notice at twilight a curious glistening to the air. Often, she found herself in the doorway of her house, or outside, not remembering how she'd got there. For long minutes, she would stare as the colors faded and a glassy light emerged from the sky and from the Scotch pines surrounding the house. It did not seem to her a natural light, and in weak moments she thought, This is the crossing-over time. She watched, not knowing what she might be seeing. She felt aroused, vigilant. She felt apprehension. She wondered if the strange glistening to the air had always been there but in her previous, protected life she hadn't noticed it.

This October evening, before the sun had entirely set, a pair of headlights turned in to the driveway, some distance away by the road. She was startled into alertness—at first not sure where she was. Then she remembered: Anton Kruppev was dropping by to see her.

Dropping by, he'd said. Or maybe she'd said, *Why don't you drop by*?

She couldn't make out his face. He was driving a pickup truck with white lettering on one side. He climbed down from the driver's seat in the high cab and lurched toward her on the shadowy path—a tall male scarecrow figure with a misshapen Halloween pumpkin for a head.

What a shock! Hadley backed away, not sure what she was seeing. A grinning pumpkin head on a man's shoulders, its leering cutout eyes not lit from within, like a jack-o'-lantern, but dark, glassy. And the voice issuing through the grinning slash-mouth in heavily accented English: "Ma'am? Is correct address? You are—lady of the house?"

She laughed, nervously. She supposed she was meant to laugh.

With grating mock gravity, the voice persevered: "You are—resident here, Ma'am? I am—welcome here? Yes?"

It was a joke. One of Anton Kruppev's awkward jokes. He'd succeeded in frightening Hadley, though probably that hadn't been his intention—probably he'd just meant to make her laugh. It was embarrassing that she'd been genuinely frightened, for she had known perfectly well that Anton was coming. And who else but Anton Kruppev would show up like this, with a Halloween pumpkin for a head?

At the co-op, Anton was the most eager and courteous of workers. He was the one who joked with customers, and laughed at his own jokes; he was boyish, vulnerable, and touching. His halting speech was itself a kind of laughter, not fully intelligible yet contagious. For all his clumsiness, you could tell that he was an exceptionally intelligent man. Hadley could see that he'd gone to painstaking trouble carving the pumpkin head: it was large, bulbous, weirdly veined and striated, twice the size of a normal man's head, with triangular eyes, a triangular nose, and a mouth studded with fang-teeth. Somehow, he'd managed to force the thing over his head—Hadley couldn't quite see how.

"How ingenious, Anton! Did you carve it yourself?"

This was the sort of inane question you asked Anton Kruppev. For you had to say something to alleviate the tension of the man's aggressive-doggy eagerness to please, to impress, to make you laugh. Hadley recalled the first time Anton had come by to see her, which had been the previous week—the strained and protracted conversation between them when, after Hadley had served him coffee and little sandwiches on multigrain bread, Anton hadn't seemed to know how to depart; his lurching over her, his spasm of a handshake, and his clumsy wet kiss on her cheek which had seemed to sting her, and to thrill her, like the brush of a bat's wings.

"Yes, *Ma'am.* You think—you will *buy*?"

"That depends, Anton. How much . . ."

"For you, *Ma'am*, no charge!"

This forced joke, how long would it be kept up? Hadley wondered in exasperation. In middle school, boys like Anton Kruppev were snubbed—*Ha ha, very funny!*—but once you were an adult how could you discourage such humor without being rude? Hadley was thirty-nine. Anton couldn't have been more than twenty-nine. He'd been born in what was now called Bosnia and Herzegovina, had lost his parents, and was brought to the United States by a surviving grandparent. He'd gone to American schools, including M.I.T., and yet in all those years had not become convincingly *American.*

Trying too hard, Hadley thought. The sign of the foreign-born.

In a kind of anxious triumph, sensing his hostess's exasperation yet determined not to acknowledge it, Anton swung the lurid pumpkin head down from his shoulders, holding it in his chafed-looking, big-knuckled hands. Now Hadley could see that the pumpkin was only two-thirds of a shell. It had been gutted and carved and its back part cut away—the back of what would be, in a human, the cranium. So the uncanny pumpkin head was a kind of pumpkin mask set on Anton's shoulders and held in place by hand. Yet it was so lifelike; as the scarecrow figure had lurched up the walk in her direction, the face had appeared alive.

"Is good? Is—surprise? 'Happy Halloween' is right?"

Was it Halloween? Hadley was sure it was not. October 31st wasn't for several more days.

"Is for you, Hedley. To set here."

He was red-faced now and smiling in a shyly aggressive manner. On his angular face and in the stiff, wiry hair that receded sharply from his forehead were bits of pumpkin flesh and seeds, at which Anton wiped, surreptitiously, the way a boy might wipe at his runny nose. Hadley thought, If he kisses me, he will smell of pumpkin.

Her husband had died and abandoned her. Now other men would *drop by* the house.

Anton presented Hadley with the misshapen pumpkin. The damned thing must have weighed fifteen pounds. It almost slipped from her hands. Hadley thought it would have served Anton Kruppev right if she'd dropped the pumpkin and it had smashed on the brick. No doubt, he'd have offered to clean it up.

"Anton, thank you! This is very . . ."

Their hands brushed together. Anton was standing close beside her. He was several inches taller than Had-

TODD JAMES

ley, though his posture was slouched, his back prematurely rounded. Perhaps there was something wrong with his spine. And he breathed quickly, audibly, as if he'd been running. Or as if he'd been about to declare something and then thought better of it.

Lanky Anton Kruppev had appeared perhaps a year earlier at the organic-food-and-gardening co-op where Hadley had once shopped regularly—back when she'd prepared elaborate meals for herself and her husband—and now shopped only from time to time. He'd always been alert and attentive to Hadley. Since late March, she'd been in a trance of self-absorption that was like a narcotic to her—in fact, to get through the worst of her insomniac nights Hadley had had to take sleeping pills, which left her dazed and groggy throughout the day—and she'd scarcely been aware of Anton Kruppev except as a helpful and persistent presence, a worker who seemed always to be waiting on her. It was only recently that he'd dared to be more direct, asking if he might come by her house after the co-op closed one evening, to bring her several bags of peat moss that were too heavy and cumbersome for Hadley to remove from the trunk of her car by herself. He'd offered to spread the peat moss wherever she wanted it spread.

Hadley had hesitated before saying yes. It was true, she was attracted to Anton Kruppev, to a degree. He reminded her of the foreign-born classmates she'd known in middle school, in north Philadelphia; skinny, pasty-faced boys with round eyeglasses and tortured ways of speaking, as if their tongues were malformed. Hadley had been drawn to them, but she'd never befriended them. But now, in weak moments, she was grateful for anyone who was kind to her; since her husband's premature death, she'd felt eviscerated, worthless. *There is not one person to whom you matter now. This is the crossing over.* In a sort of hypnotic state, she found herself listening to a voice not her own yet couched in the cadences of her own most intimate speech. This voice did not accuse her, or pass judgment, and yet she knew herself judged, contemptible. *Not one person. This is the crossing over.* She had signed the paper for her husband's cremation. In her memory, distorted and blurred by tears, her own name had been printed on the contract, beside her husband's name. She'd felt that, signing for him, she'd signed for herself as well. It was finished for her—the life of the emotions, the ability to feel.

Yet with another part of her mind Hadley remained alert, prudent. She was not an adventurous woman, nor was she reckless. She'd been married to one man for nearly twenty years; she was childless and had virtually no family. She had a circle of friends in whom she confided sparingly. Normally, she would never have consented to a stranger *dropping by* her house, but she'd learned that Anton Kruppev was a postdoc fellow at the prestigious Molecular Biology Institute. He had a Ph.D. from M.I.T. and he'd taught at Caltech; his area of specialization was microbial genetics. She'd once seen him at a string-quartet recital on campus. Another time, she'd seen him walking along the canal towpath, alone. He'd been wearing headphones, and he'd kept his head sharply bowed, working his mouth as if he were arguing with someone. He'd been so lost in concentration that his gaze had drifted over her without seeing her—his favorite co-op customer in a cable-knit sweater, wool slacks, and boots, invisible to him. She'd liked it that Anton Kruppev hadn't noticed her. That she could observe the young man without his observing her. She'd thought, He's a scientist. He won't see anything that isn't crucial for him to see.

Now, in her house, Hadley felt a frisson of power over her awkward visitor. She was certain that Anton hadn't known her husband and wasn't aware that she was recently widowed. (Hadley still wore her engagement ring and wedding ring, of course.) Her power, she thought, lay in her essential indifference to the man, to his very maleness, his sexuality as clumsy as an odd-sized package he was obliged to carry, to proffer to strangers like her. He had the malnourished look of someone who has been rebuffed many times yet remains determined. There are men of surpassing ugliness with whom women fall in love, but Anton Kruppev was not one of them. His ugliness was not charismatic; his maleness was of another species altogether. Thinking of this, Hadley felt a swell of elation. *If he kisses me tonight, he will smell of—garbage.*

Hadley was smiling. She saw how Anton stared at her, as if her smile were for him.

She thanked him for the pumpkin yet again. Her voice was warm, welcoming. What an "original" gift it was, and so "cleverly" carved.

Anton's face glowed with pleasure. "W-wait, Hedley! There is more."

"Hedley," he called her. At the co-op, it was "Mrs. Schelle," with an emphasis on the final "e." Hadley felt no impulse to correct him.

Anton seized Hadley's hand—her fingers must have been icy, unresponsive—and pulled her with him out to the driveway. In the rear of the pickup was a large pot of what appeared to be cream-colored chrysanthemums, past their prime, and a long narrow cardboard box of produce: gnarly carrots with foot-long untrimmed greens, misshapen peppers and pears, bruised McIntosh apples that the co-op couldn't sell, even at reduced prices. And a loaf of multigrain bread that Anton insisted had been baked only that morning but hadn't sold and so would be labelled "day-old" the next morning. "In this country, there is much ignorant prejudice of 'day-old.' Everything has to be 'new,' 'perfect shape.' It is a mystery to me why to 6 P.M., when the co-op closes, this bread is good to sell but tomorrow by 8:30 A.M., when the co-op opens, it is 'old.' In the place where we come from, my family and neighbors..." Moral vehemence thickened Anton's accent; his breath came ever more audible.

Hadley would have liked to ask Anton more about his background. He'd lived through a nightmare, she knew. Ethnic cleansing. Genocide.

Yet she felt uneasy in his presence. Very likely, it had been a mistake to allow the eccentric young biologist to drop by her house a second time; she didn't want to mislead him. She was a

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

Praise *this* world, Rilke says, the jerk.
We'd stay up all night. Every angel's
berserk. Hell, if you slit monkeys
for a living, you'd pray to me, too.
I'm not so forgiving. I'm rubber, you're glue.

That elk is such a dick. He's a space tree
making a ski and a little foam chiropractor.
I set the controls, I pioneer
the seeding of the ionosphere.
I translate the Bible into velociraptor.

In front of Best Buy, the Tibetans are released,
but where's the whale on stilts that we were promised?
I fight the comets, lick the moon,
pave its lonely streets.
The sandhill cranes make brains look easy.

I go by many names: Buju Banton,
Camel Light, the New York *Times*.
Point being, rickshaws in Scranton.
I have few legs. I sleep on meat.
I'd eat your bra—point being—in a heartbeat.

—*Michael Robbins*

widow who had caused her husband to be burnt to ashes and was unrepentant, unpunished. Since March, she'd been declining invitations from friends who had known her and her husband for years. She felt impatient with their solicitude, their concern for her, which she did not deserve. *I'm sorry! I don't want to go out. I'm very tired. I go to bed and can't sleep and at 1 A.M. I take a sleeping pill. At 4 A.M., I take another. Forget me! I am something that is finished.*

She thought now that possibly she didn't have to invite her visitor into the house, that Anton might not notice her rudeness, might not know enough to interpret it as rudeness. He set the mums and the box with the produce on a white bench near Hadley's front walk. He'd boasted of being "Mister Fix-It"—and he was quick to see that the terrace behind Hadley's house contained a number of broken flagstones, which he offered to replace for her. Next he examined the garden gate, which had become warped. He managed to fix it with several deft motions of his hands. "There. It is good as 'new,' eh?" he said. He laughed as if he'd said something unexpectedly witty. Hadley was grateful that for all his clumsiness Anton had made no mention of the terrible profusion of weeds amid a lush tangle of black-eyed Susans, Russian sage, and morning-glory vines in Hadley's husband's garden, which had been allowed to go wild.

She was impressed by her visitor's energy; it brimmed and thrummed like rising yeast. She would have supposed that after a day presumably spent at the lab and several hours at the co-op Anton would be dazed with exhaustion. Yet there he was, tireless in his inspection of the exterior of Hadley's house—checking windows and locks, dragging aside broken limbs and storm debris. You'd have thought that Anton Kruppev was an old friend of the family for whom the discovery that one of the floodlights on Hadley's garage had burnt out was something of a coup, inciting him to immediate action. "You have a bulb to replace, yes? And a ladder with 'steps'—'stepladder'? I will put in—now—before it is too dark."

So adamant that Hadley had no choice but to give in.

And no choice but to invite Anton Kruppev inside, for just a while.

Politely and with regret, she explained that she had a dinner engagement later that evening, but would he like to come inside, for a drink?

"Hedley, yes, thank you! I would like—yes—so much."

Stammering with gratitude, Anton scraped his hiking boots against the welcome mat. The soles were muddy and stuck with leaves. Though Hadley insisted that it wasn't necessary, Anton removed the boots with a grunt and carefully placed them on the front step, side by side. What large boots they were, like a horse's hooves! The sodden shoelaces trailed out—left, right—in perfect symmetry.

Inside, most of the downstairs rooms were dark. Now that it was late October, night came quickly. Pleasantly excited, a little nervous, Hadley went about switching on lights. There was a curious intimacy between her and Anton Kruppev, in this matter of switching on lights. Hadley heard her voice warmly uplifted—no idea what she was saying—as her tall guest came to stand in his gray wool socks at the threshold of the living room, which he hadn't seen previously. He stared into the long, beautifully furnished room with a shoulder-high stone fireplace at its far end, book-filled shelves, Chinese carpets on a gleaming hardwood floor. Above the fireplace hung an Impressionist Wolf Kahn landscape of gorgeous pastel colors.

Excitedly, Anton Kruppev asked if the painting was by Cézanne.

"Cézanne! Hardly." Hadley laughed, the question was so naïve. Except for the surreal pastel colors and a high degree of abstraction in the rendering of massed tree trunks and foliage, there was little in the canvas to suggest the earlier master.

Outside, while Anton had been changing the floodlight, Hadley had thought, I will offer him coffee. That's enough for tonight. But now that they were out of the October chill and inside the warm house she offered him a glass of dark-red Catena wine, from a bottle originally purchased by her husband. Anton thanked her profusely—a flush of pleasure rose into his odd, angular face. In his wiry hair that was the color of ditchwater a small pumpkin seed shone.

Hadley poured herself half a glass of wine. Her hand shook just slightly. She thought, If I don't offer him a second glass. If I don't ask him to stay.

Since there was an opened jar of Brazil nuts on the sideboard, Hadley offered these to Anton, too. A cascade of nuts into a blue ceramic bowl.

Gratefully Anton drank, and Anton ate. Thirstily, hungrily. He drifted about Hadley's living room, peering at her bookshelves. Excitedly he talked—he had so much to say! He reminded Hadley of a chattering bird, a large endearingly gawky bird like an ostrich, long-legged, long-necked, with a beaky face, quick-darting inquisitive eyes.

His upper body, now that he'd removed his nylon parka, was bony, concave. Hadley imagined that he would be waxy-pale beneath his shirt. A hairless chest. A little potbelly, and spindly legs.

Hadley laughed. Already she'd almost finished her wine. A warm sensation suffused her throat and spread to the region of her heart.

Politely she tried to listen—to concentrate—as her eccentric guest babbled rapidly and nervously and with an air of schoolboy enthusiasm.

How annoying Anton was! Like many shy people, once he began talking he seemed not to know how to stop; he lacked the social sleight of hand to change the subject, and he had no idea how to engage another person. Like a runaway vehicle, he plunged on, heedless. And yet there was something undeniably attractive about him.

He was becoming more incensed now, impassioned—though he seemed to be joking, too—speaking of American politics, American pop culture, and "American fundamentalist ignorance" about stem-cell research. And, how ignorant! More than ninety per cent of Americans believed in God—and in the Devil.

Hadley frowned at this. Ninety per cent? Was that so? It didn't seem plausible that as many people would believe in the Devil as believed in God.

"Yes, yes! To believe in the Christian God is to believe in His enemy, the Devil. That is known."

Anton drained his glass of wine and then helped himself to a second glass, scooping up another handful of the Brazil nuts. Hadley wondered if he meant to be rude, or if he simply didn't know any better. "I really can't think," she persisted, "that as many Americans believe in the Devil as believe in God. I'm sure that isn't so. Americans are—we are—a tolerant nation."

How smug this sounded. Hadley paused, not knowing what she meant to say. The dark wine had gone quickly to her head.

With a snort of derision, Anton said, "A tolerant nation—is it? Such 'tolerance' as swallows up everything and what it cannot it makes of an enemy."

"Enemy? What do you mean?"

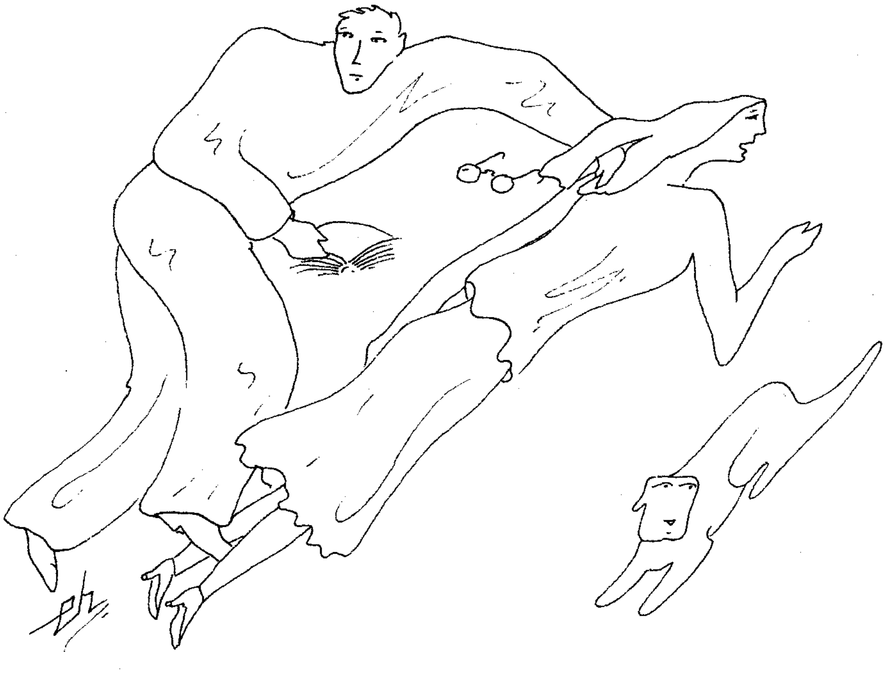
"It makes of *war*. First is declared the *enemy*, then the *war*."

Anton laughed, baring his teeth. Chunky yellow teeth they were, and the gums pale pink. Seeing how Hadley stared at him, he said, in a voice heavy with sarcasm, "First, there is the 'tolerance'—then the 'preëmpt strike.' "

Hadley's face filled with the heat of indignation. This was insulting, deliberately so. Anton Kruppev, who'd lived in the United States for years, knew very well the history of the Iraq war, how Americans had been misled, deceived by the Republican leadership. Of course he knew. She opened her mouth to protest, then thought better of it.

Surreptitiously, she glanced at her wristwatch. Only 6:48 P.M.! Her guest had been inside the house for less than half an hour, but the strain of his visit was such that it seemed much longer.

Still Anton was prowling about, snooping. Artifacts from trips that Hadley and her husband had taken, over the years—Indonesian pottery, Chinese wall scrolls and watercolors, beautifully carved wooden figures from Bali, a wall of brightly colored "primitive" paintings from Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala. Anton seemed particularly interested in the books on Hadley's shelves, as if the hundreds of titles acquired years earlier by Hadley's husband—who'd earned both a Ph.D. in European history and a law degree from Columbia University—possessed an immediate significance and were not simply relics of a lost and irretrievable private past.



"Oh, crap! I left 'The Origin of Species' out where the kids can find it."

"You have read all these, Hedley, yes?"

Hadley laughed, embarrassed. No, she had not.

"Then—someone else? All these?"

Hadley laughed again, uncertain. Was Anton Kruppev mocking her? He was peering at her, as at her art objects and bookshelves, with an almost hostile intensity; yet she could not help it, so American was her nature, so female, that she was still anxious that he like her, and admire her—if she could be sure that he did, then she would send him away in triumph.

She thought again of the foreign-born youths she'd known in school. In middle school, they had seemed pitiful—objects of sympathy, charity, and condescension, if not derision. In high school, they'd become A students, star athletes. There was a drivenness to them, something that the complacent Americans had initially mistaken for weakness.

In his soiled wool socks, Anton seemed more childlike than aggressive. Hadley supposed that his own living quarters, in university-owned housing, were minimal, cramped, somewhere in the row of subsidized apartments along the river. "Ah! This is solar room?" He had wandered into the glass-walled room at the rear of the stone house which had been added on by Hadley and her husband; the "solarium," intended to be sun-warmed, was furnished with white wicker furniture, chintz pillows, and a white wrought-iron table and chairs, like an outdoor porch. But now the room was dark and shadowed, and the bright festive colors were almost invisible. Through the vertical glass panels shone a faint crescent moon, entangled in the tops of the tall pines.

"Such a beautiful house—it is old, is it?—so big, for one person. You are so very lucky, Hedley. You know this, yes?"

Lucky! Hadley smiled, confused. She tried to see this.

"Yes, I think so. I mean—yes."

"So many houses in this 'village,' as it is called, they are so big. For so few people. On each acre of land, it may be one person—the demographics would show. Yes?"

Hadley wasn't sure what Anton Kruppev was saying. A brash sort of merriment shone in his eyes, widened behind the smudged lenses of his wire-rimmed glasses.

He asked Hadley how long she'd lived in the house, and when she told him that she and her husband had moved there in 1988 he maintained his pained, fixed smile but did not ask about her husband. He must know, then, she thought. Someone at the co-op has told him.

Bluntly, Anton said, "Yes, it is luck. America is the land of opportunity—all that is deserved is not always granted."

"But it wasn't luck. My husband worked. What we have he earned."

"And you, Hedley? You have 'earned' also?"

"I—I—I don't take anything for granted. Not any longer."

Anton peered at her closely. It was as if the biologist were trying to determine the meaning of her words by looking at her. A kind of perverse echolocation—was that the word?—like a bat following a trail of high-pitched beeps. Except that Anton was staring. Hadley saw that the pumpkin seed—unless it was a second seed, or a bit of pumpkin gristle—still glistened in his wiry hair, which looked as if it needed shampooing and would be coarse to the touch. She felt a reckless impulse to pluck the seed out, though she could not risk the intimacy.

He would misunderstand. He is such a fool, he would misinterpret.

But if I wanted a lover. A lover for whom I felt no love.

As if Anton had heard these words, his mood suddenly changed. His smile became startled, less strained. He asked Hadley if there were any more repairs for Mister Fix-It, and Hadley said quickly, "No. No more."

"Your basement—furnace—that I could check. I am trained. You smile, Hedley, but it is so. To support myself in school—"

Hadley was sure that she wasn't smiling. More firmly, she thanked Anton and told him she had to leave soon. "I'm meeting friends for dinner in town."

This was clearly a lie. Hadley could lie only flatly, brazenly.

Anton took a step closer. "I would come back another day, if needed. I would be happy to do this, Hedley. You know this—I am your friend Anton—yes?"

"No. I mean—yes. Some other time, maybe."

Hadley began to lead her guest back out into the living room, into the lighted gallery and the foyer near the front door. He followed in her wake muttering to himself—unless he was talking to Hadley, and meant her to hear, to laugh, for it seemed that Anton was laughing, under his breath. He'd drained his second glass of wine and his movements had become jerky, uncoördinated, like those of a partially animate scarecrow.

It was then that Anton began to confide in Hadley, in a lowered and agitated voice: the head of his laboratory at the institute had cheated him; he'd taken the discoveries of Anton Kruppev to claim for his own; he'd published a paper in which Anton was cited merely in a list of graduate assistants, and now that Anton had protested he was exiling Anton from the lab. He'd refused to speak to Anton at the institute and had banished him, and so Anton had gone to the university president—he had demanded to be allowed to speak to him, but of course he'd been turned away. Anton had returned the next morning, and when he was again told no he demanded to speak with the provost—and the university attorney. Their offices were near one another in the administration building. But they were all in conspiracy together, with the head of the institute and the head of Anton's laboratory—he knew this! He was not such a fool, not to know this! Anton had become excited and someone had called security. The campus police had arrived and led him away protesting; they had threatened to turn him over to the town police, who would arrest him for "trespassing" and "threatening bodily harm." Anton had been terrified—he would be deported by Homeland Security. He did not yet have his American citizenship—

"You are smiling, Hedley? What is the joke?"

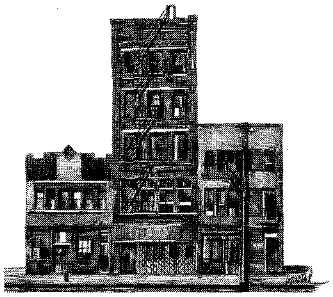
Smiling? During this long, breathless, disjointed speech, Hadley had been staring at Anton Kruppev in astonishment.

"It is amusing to you, yes? That after all my work, my effort—I am most hardworking in the lab—our supervisor exploits my good nature. He was always saying, 'Anton is the *stoic* among us'—what this means, this flattery of Americans, is that you can be used. To be *used*—that is our purpose, to the institute. But you must not indicate that you are *in the know.*" Anton spoke like someone whose grievances were so far in excess of his ability to express them that he might have been the bearer of an ancient, tribal burden. "And now, after three years, when my findings are cheated from me and I am of no more use, it is time to toss away into the Dumpster. That is good word, good joke, eh? 'Dumpster'—very good American joke. The institute is saying my contract will not be renewed, for the federal grant is ended. And my supervisor has not ever got around to aiding me with my citizenship application—years it has been. Of course, I have been *dial-tory* myself—I have been working *so hard* in the lab. Yesterday morning it was, the decision came to me by e-mail. You—you must not smile, Hedley! That is very selfish. That is very selfish and very cruel."

The indignant man loomed over Hadley, his angular face hardened with strain. His jaws were clenched. A sweaty-garbagey smell wafted from his heated body. Behind the smudged lenses his eyes were deep-socketed, wary. Hadley said nervously, "Maybe you should leave, Anton. I'm expecting friends. I mean . . . they're stopping by, to take me with them. To dinner in town . . ."

Hadley didn't want her agitated visitor to sense how frightened she was of him. Her mistake was in turning away to lead him to the door. Insulting him. He looped an arm around her neck, and in an instant they were struggling off balance. He grabbed at her, and kissed her—kissed and bit at her lips, like a suddenly ravenous rodent. Both their wineglasses went flying, clattering to the floor.

She was trying to draw breath to scream but he'd pushed her down. She thought he was trying to strangle her, then it seemed that he was still kissing her, or trying to. Panicked, she jammed her elbows into his chest, his ribs; his mouth closed over hers and she thought that he would bite off her lip. With a kind of manic elation, he was murmuring what sounded like *You like me! You want this!* Grunting with effort, he straddled her, his face flushed with emotion; their struggle had become purely physical, and urgent, enacted now in near-silence, except for their panting. Hadley had no idea what she was doing, moving her head from side to side, trying to avoid the man's mouth, his sharp yellow teeth, the smell of his breath. In a paroxysm of desperation, Hadley managed to squirm out from beneath him, like an animal crawling on hands and knees, and in that instant she almost believed that she might escape Anton Kruppev—but he had only to lunge after her, seize her ankle in his strong fingers, laughing and climbing over her, straddling her again, more forcibly this time, closing his fingers around her neck. In a choked voice, Anton was saying, "You want me here! You asked for this. You have no right to laugh at me. You and your 'trustee' husband." Hadley had no idea what Anton was saying. Trustee? Her husband had served on an advisory board for the history department; he'd had no association with the molecular-biology institute. She could not have explained this; she had not the strength, or the breath, yet she had time to think, almost calmly, This can't be happening. This is wrong. She seemed to see herself in that instant with a strange stillness and detachment, as she had during her marriage when while she was making love with her husband her mind had slipped free and all that was physical, visceral, and immediate was at a little distance. Though now, tasting the wine on Anton's tongue, the sour-feral wine taste of a man's mouth, Hadley knew that she was loathed by the man; his hatred was pure and fiery as she begged him, *Please don't hurt me, Anton. I want to be your friend, Anton. I will help you.* It wasn't wine she was tasting but blood from her upper lip. He disengaged from her roughly and got to his feet, looming over her, his shirt loose, splattered with blood. In a voice of anguish, rage, incoherence, he uttered something that she did not understand, then staggered away to the front door. Then—to her astonishment—he was gone.



She lay very still, her heart pounding, her body bathed in sweat and the smell of him, her brain blank, oblivious of her surroundings. After several minutes—it may have been as many as ten or fifteen—she understood that she was alone. It had not quite happened to her the way that she'd believed it would happen, the crossing over.

She managed to stand. She was dazed, sobbing. She leaned against a chair in the hall, touching the walls, then stumbled to the open doorway and stood, staring outside. The front walk was dimly illuminated by the moon overhead. There was a meagre light, a near-to-fading light. She saw that the pumpkin head had fallen from the step, or had been kicked. It lay shattered on its side. She could see that the innards had been scooped out, but negligently, so that seeds remained, bits of pumpkin gristle. She stepped outside. She wiped at her mouth, which was still bleeding. She would run back into the house and dial 911. She would report an assault. She would summon help. For she required help, badly; she knew that Anton Kruppev would return. Certainly he would return. On the front walk, she stood gazing toward the road—what she could see of the road in the darkness. There were headlights there. An unmoving vehicle. It was very dark, a winter dark had come upon them. She called out, "Hello? Hello? Who is it?" Headlights on the roadway, where his vehicle was parked. ♦

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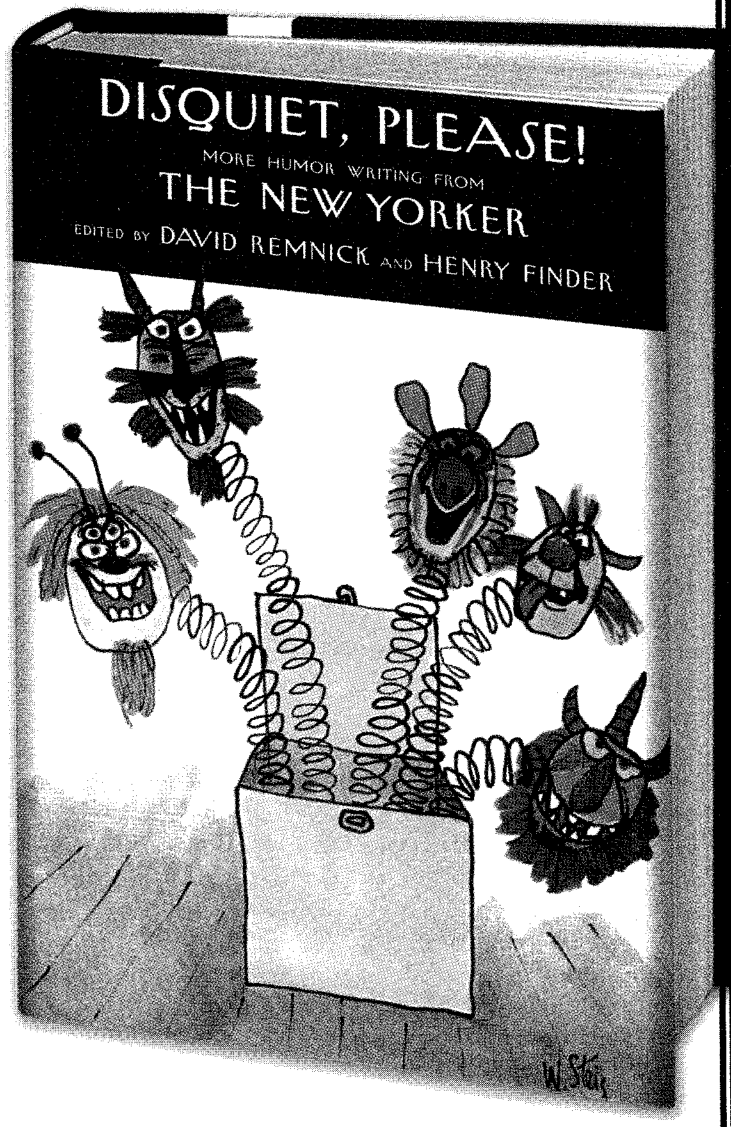
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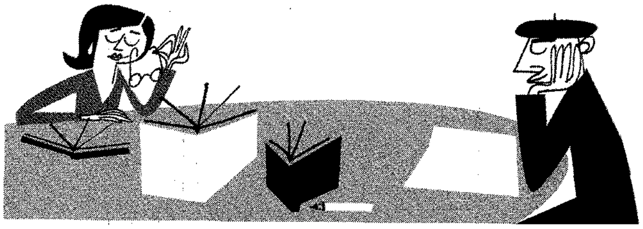


A CRITIC AT LARGE

BEWARE OF PITY

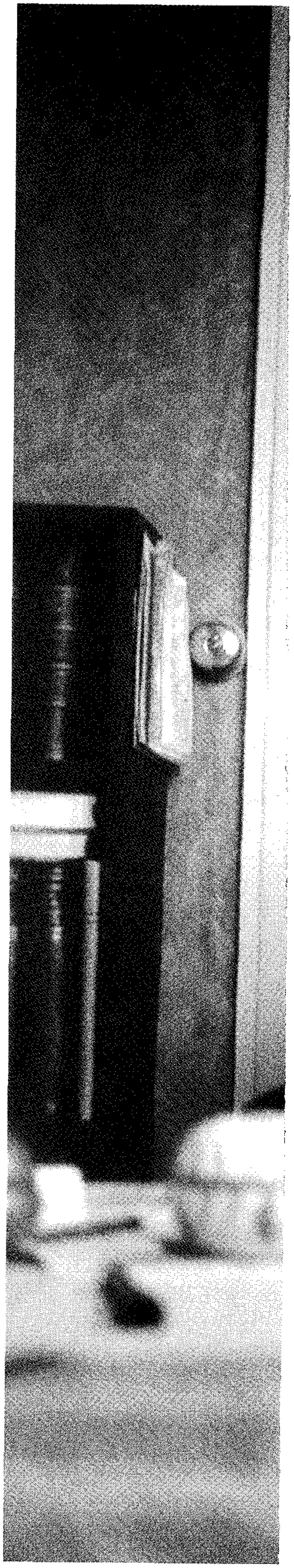
Hannah Arendt and the power of the impersonal.

BY ADAM KIRSCH

In 1999, the Croatian novelist Slavenka Drakulić visited The Hague to observe the trials for war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. Among the defendants was Goran Jelisić, a thirty-year-old Serb from Bosnia, who struck her as "a man you can trust." With his "clear, serene face, lively eyes, and big reassuring grin," he reminded Drakulić of one of her daughter's friends. Many of the witnesses at The Hague shared this view of the defendant—even many Muslims, who told the court how Jelisić helped an old Muslim neighbor repair her windows after they were shattered by a bomb, or how he helped another Muslim friend escape Bosnia with his family. But the Bosnian Muslims who had known Jelisić seven years earlier, when he was a guard at the Luka prison camp, had different stories to tell. Over a period of eighteen days in 1992, they testified, Jelisić himself killed more than a hundred prisoners. As Drakulić writes, he chose his victims at random, by asking "a man to kneel down and place his head over a metal drainage grating. Then he would execute him with two bullets in the back of the head from his pistol, which was equipped with a silencer." He liked to introduce himself with the words "Hitler was the first Adolf, I am the second." He was sentenced to forty years in prison.

None of Drakulić's experience in creating fictional characters could help her understand such a mind, which remained all the more unfathomable because of Jelisić's apparent normality, even gentleness. "The more you realize that war criminals might be ordinary people, the more afraid you become," she wrote. What Drakulić discovered, in other words, is what Hannah Arendt, at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, in Jerusalem, some forty years earlier, called "the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*." Drakulić titled her book "They Would Never Hurt a Fly," after Arendt's description of a typical Nazi functionary who "does not regard himself as a murderer because he has not done it out of inclination but in his professional capacity. Out of sheer passion he would never do harm to a fly." Arendt's concept has become so famous that it is hard to remember how bitterly controversial it was when she first used it. Many readers resisted what looked like an attempt to trivialize the Nazis. "No banality of a man could have done so hugely evil a job so well," one critic wrote. Yet even those who dispute Arendt's judgment acknowledge her influence on the way we think about political evil. As long as ordinary people can be transformed overnight into mass murderers, we are still living in Hannah Arendt's world.

It is an ambiguous tribute to Arendt, then, that her scholarly and popular profile is higher today than at any time since she died, in 1975, at the age of sixty-nine. In the past few years, a number of Arendt's works have been published by Schocken Books, where she worked as an editor in the nineteen-forties. "The Origins of Totalitarianism" has been accompanied by several collections of essays—most notably "The Jewish Writings,"



Arendt in a Paris café, in 1935.

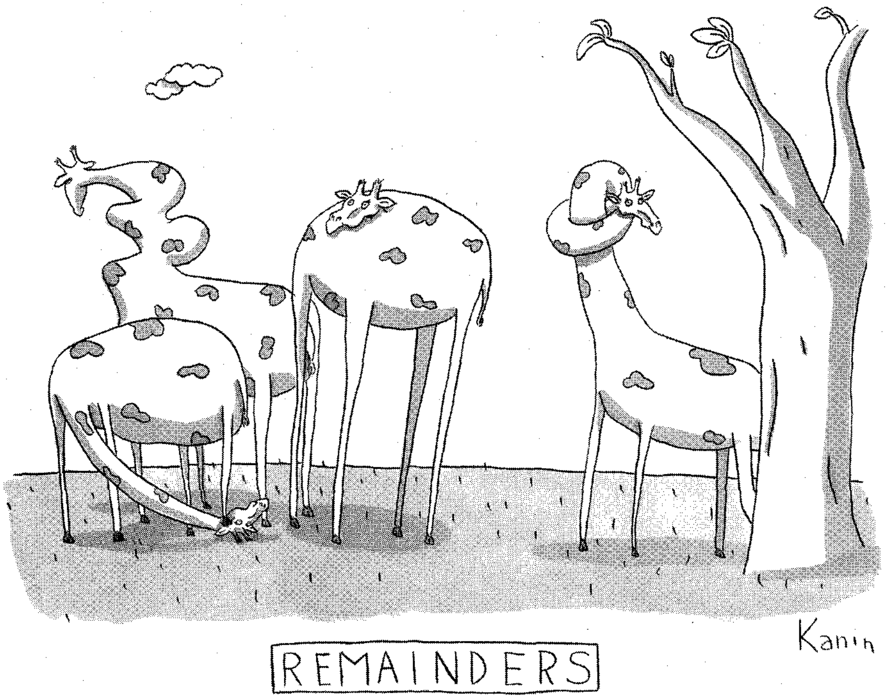
ABOVE: LENE DUE-JENSEN; OPPOSITE: HANNAH ARENDT BLUECHER LITERARY TRUST

bration of the public realm was matched by a mistrust of the private realm. To her, the personal was edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman, which includes Arendt's wartime journalism. Scholars around the world have kept pace with a torrent of studies—on Arendt and international relations, Arendt and human rights, Arendt and the Jewish question. It is hard to name another thinker of the twentieth century more sought after as a guide to the dilemmas of the twenty-first.

Yet it is not just political theorists who find Arendt a source of fascination. The most intense curiosity about Arendt in the past few years has had less to do with her work than with her life. Above all, the publication in English, in 2004, of Arendt's correspondence with Martin Heidegger, after decades of speculation about their relationship, brought renewed scrutiny to her intimate life. To a thinker who believed that the personal was emphatically not political, this kind of attention would have been very unwelcome. She derided the "pseudoscientific apparatuses of depth-psychology, psychoanalysis, graphology, etc." as nothing more than "curiosity-seeking." Yet Arendt's deeply ambivalent relationship with Heidegger—her lover, teacher, and friend—has a more than personal significance, since it casts light on the most vexed issue in her work: her tangled relationship with Jewishness and Germanness.

Arendt's legend—or, perhaps it is better to say, her image—has become as important to posterity as her theories. In part, of course, this is because Arendt is one of the few women in the traditionally male pantheon of political philosophy. It makes sense that it is feminist readers who find the most food for thought in Arendt's image—even though Arendt denied that she was a feminist. Julia Kristeva devotes some pages of her recent book on Arendt to her changing appearance, as documented in photographs: from the girlish "seductress" of the nineteen-twenties, gazing poetically at the camera, to the confident intellectual of the fifties, whose "femininity . . . beats a retreat" as her face becomes "a caricature of the . . . battle scars" received during her public career.

Kristeva's reverie on Arendt's "psychic bisexuality" is not the kind of attention that gets paid to Kant or Heidegger. Yet it is a sign of the way that Arendt has emerged as something both more and less than a political theorist. The most rewarding way to read Arendt, and the best way to make sense of both the strengths and the limitations of her work, is to approach her as Michelle-Irène Brudny does in "Hannah Arendt: An Essay in Intellectual Biography": "I definitely take Hannah Arendt to be less a political philosopher or a political theorist . . . than an author in the strong sense of the word." Kristeva, still more emphatically, considers Arendt's writings "to be less a body of work than an action." Like so many Jewish writers of her generation, Arendt attempted in her work to shine the light of intellect on the extreme darkness she lived through. That she chose to do this in the most impersonal of genres—philosophy and history—rather than through memoir, or even poetry (which she loved to read, and wrote from time to time), is itself a clue to the immense psychological pressures that shaped her work and, in the end, partly disfigured it.



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The power of the impersonal is the great theme of Arendt's work, and it is no coincidence that she first discovered it in the most literary, least theoretical of her books, "Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess." It was the first book she wrote (not counting her doctoral dissertation), but it was not published for almost two decades, and it remains, even today, a kind of orphan in the Arendt canon. Readers of "Eichmann in Jerusalem" and "The Origins of Totalitarianism" tend to ignore this impressionistic biography of a late-eighteenth-century hostess and letter writer, whose Berlin salon was one of the breeding grounds of German Romanticism. Yet the Rahel biography, as Kristeva says, is "a veritable laboratory of Arendt's political thought."

Arendt acknowledged her deep affinity with Rahel Varnhagen, née Levin, calling her "my very closest woman friend, unfortunately dead a hundred years now." What they had in common was their predicament as highly gifted Jewish women in a culture that exacted a terrible psychic toll both on women and on Jews. In Berlin, at the time of the French Revolution, Rahel's friends included some of Prussia's greatest minds. They were drawn to her freedom from social convention, and to the exquisite sensibility that informed her cult of Goethe, her extensive correspondence, and her love affairs. Yet during the Napoleonic Wars, as Prussian nationalism began to flourish, many of Rahel's German friends deserted her; her Gentile fiancé, whom she saw as her ticket to respectable society, refused to marry her. She was left alone with her inwardness, mourning "the thing which all my life seemed to me the greatest shame, which was the misery and misfortune of my life—having been born a Jewess." Not until she was dying did she decide that, all the same, Jewishness was the one thing "I should on no account now wish to have missed."

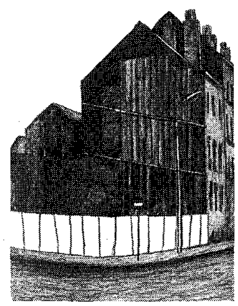
When Arendt first discovered Rahel, in the late nineteen-twenties, she recognized her as both a tutelary spirit and a cautionary tale. Arendt was born in 1906, into a family that, like so many German Jewish families, ardently pursued Rahel's ideal of culture, or *Bildung*. "With us from Germany," she wrote bitterly during the Second World War, "the word 'assimilation' received a 'deep' philosophical meaning. You can hardly realize how serious we were about it." Again like Rahel, Arendt was conspicuous for her intelligence from an early age; as a young woman, she was nicknamed Pallas Athene. When, in 1924, she went to Marburg University, she entered into the study of theology and philosophy as into her own inheritance, even though she recognized that they might be uncomfortable subjects for a Jew. When she signed up for a seminar on the New Testament, she sternly warned the professor, Rudolf Bultmann, that "there must be no anti-Semitic remarks."

Yet Arendt could not have suspected just how fraught her encounter with philosophy would turn out to be. Like all the most enterprising students, she enrolled in a class with Martin Heidegger. Heidegger was then at work on his magnum opus, "Being and Time," but already he had a reputation as a thrilling teacher. As Arendt remembered a lifetime later, in her tribute to Heidegger on his eightieth birthday, "Little more than a name was known, but the name made its way through all of Germany like the rumor of a secret king." She was thus more than prepared to respond when the married, thirty-five-year-old professor began to fall in love with her.

The fact that Heidegger and Arendt were lovers was no secret to her close friends—"Oh, how very exciting!" Karl Jaspers exclaimed when Arendt told him—and it has been public knowledge since Elisabeth Young-Bruehl revealed it in her 1982 biography. But the affair became a kind of highbrow scandal in 1995, when Elzbieta Ettinger, a professor at M.I.T., wrote about it in a short book, "Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger." Ettinger, who had been granted access to the Heidegger-Arendt correspondence for the purpose of writing a new biography of Arendt, instead made it the subject of a sensational exposé. The book was loftily derided by Arendtians; yet, without the curiosity that Ettinger excited, it is doubtful that Arendt's and Heidegger's estates would have consented to the publication of their letters, which cast a fascinating new light on this most important chapter in Arendt's life.

The correspondence, which is collected in "Letters 1925-1975," is revealing, first of all, in its very incompleteness. Arendt kept all of Heidegger's letters, from the very beginning; he kept few of hers, and none from the early years. As a result, Heidegger's voice dominates the book, just as his personality and his decisions dominated the affair. As one would expect, Heidegger—an older male professor, who also happened to be one of Europe's greatest philosophers—treats his teen-age lover with a combination of passion and condescension. He is capable of poetic raptures: "The demonic struck me. . . . Nothing like it has ever happened to me," he writes not long after their first meeting. Yet while Arendt's intellect helped draw him to her, he is deeply patronizing about her intellectual ambitions. He urges her to take a "decisive step back from the path toward the terrible solitude of academic research, which only man can endure," and to concentrate instead on becoming "a woman who can give happiness, and around whom all is happiness."

Understandably, after a year of covert meetings and emotional confrontations, Arendt left Marburg for Heidelberg, where, in Jaspers, she found a more equable teacher. It is just possible to glimpse in the letters the pain that the affair caused Arendt—above all, by enforcing a sense of powerlessness. Early on, in an autobiographical composition addressed to Heidegger and titled "Shadows," Arendt described herself in the third person: "Her sensitivity and vulnerability, which had always given her an exclusive air, grew to almost grotesque proportions." As late as 1929, when Arendt ran into Heidegger at a train station and for a moment he failed to recognize her, she found the experience shattering: "When I was a small child, that was the way my mother once stupidly and playfully frightened me. I had read the fairy tale about Dwarf Nose, whose nose gets so long nobody recognizes him anymore. My mother pretended that had happened to me. I still vividly recall the blind terror with which I kept crying: but I am your child, I am your Hannah.—That is what it was like today."



The full significance of her experience with Heidegger did not unfold, however, until the early nineteen-thirties. As the Weimar Republic collapsed and Nazi violence grew, Arendt began to hear unsettling rumors about Heidegger's sympathy with National Socialism. Her letter to him on the subject is lost, but we can gauge her anxiety from Heidegger's response, which is tentatively dated "Winter 1932/33." "The rumors that are upsetting you are slanders," he begins, and proceeds to give an evasively technical defense of his treatment of Jewish students and colleagues. (If he refused to supervise a Jewish student's dissertation, he explains, it was only because "I am on sabbatical this winter semester"; and, besides, "the man who, with my help, got a stipend to go to Rome is a Jew.") Nowhere in the letter is there any denial of Nazi sympathies. Instead, Heidegger simply assures Arendt that, whatever happens, "it cannot touch my relationship to you." After reading this letter, Arendt could not have been entirely surprised when, in 1933, Heidegger joined the Nazi Party and became the rector of Freiburg, with the mission of aligning the university with the new party-state.

By that time, Arendt was already in exile from the land of her birth. In the spring of 1933, just after Hitler took power, she began to do clandestine work for a Zionist organization, documenting anti-Semitism in the new Germany. She was arrested and interrogated, and, after eight days, released. Immediately, she and her mother fled the country, slipping across the Czech border at night. But while she later dated her political awakening to the Reichstag Fire, it is clear that, for several years before 1933, she had been growing more and more alert to the untenable position of Jews in Germany. The private humiliation and political betrayal she suffered at the hands of Heidegger, the living embodiment of German intellect, only brought home to her the lessons she was already learning from her study of Rahel Varnhagen.

When she came to write about Rahel's life, then, Arendt brought to it a passion and a personal commitment born of her own experience. No one could have believed more seriously than Rahel in the cultivation of the spirit. Yet to Arendt she appears as merely the victim of a terrible illusion—"the hapless human being, the *shlemihl*, who has anticipated nothing." The lesson that Arendt drew was that a beautiful soul is not enough, for "it was precisely the soul for which life showed no consideration." To live fully and securely, every human being needs what Arendt calls "specificity," the social and political status that comes with full membership in a community. Arendt had said of herself, in the "Shadows" letter, that "she did not belong to anything, anywhere, ever"; so, too, Rahel was "exiled . . . all alone to a place where nothing could reach her, where she was cut off from all human things, from everything that men have the right to claim." Avoiding that helpless "place" became the goal of Arendt's life and thought. The categorical imperative of her political theory might be phrased: Thou shalt not be a *shlemihl*.

By the time she finished writing "Rahel Varnhagen," in 1938—thanks in part to the prodding of Walter Benjamin, her friend and fellow-exile—Arendt had come to see Rahel's predicament as an early sign of the political naïveté that had left European Jewry so vulnerable to Nazi persecution. The biography was written, she later said, "with an awareness of the doom of German Judaism (although, naturally, without any premonition of how far the physical annihilation of the Jewish people in Europe would be carried)." And, just as Arendt's attitude toward Rahel was an unstable mixture of sympathy and criticism, so, too, her reaction to the Jewish crisis was a blend of urgent concern and haughty contempt.

Arendt's tendency to blame the victim, which produced such an explosive effect in "Eichmann in Jerusalem" in the nineteen-sixties, is already obvious in the articles she wrote during the war for *Aufbau*, the German-language Jewish newspaper in New York. Arendt had been able to flee Vichy France for the United States in 1941, thanks to a visa she received with the help of the Emergency Rescue Committee, a volunteer group that used both legal and illegal means to get Jews and others in peril out of the country. She moved into two rooms on West Ninety-fifth Street, and was joined a few weeks later by her mother, who also managed to escape France by way of Lisbon. It is a measure of Arendt's dauntlessness, and her determination to make her voice heard publicly, that before the year was out she was hired as a columnist for *Aufbau*. It was the first step in an American journalistic career that eventually, as her facility in English improved, led her to become a contributor to *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Review of Books*.

Arendt's wartime articles, collected in "The Jewish Writings," offer a crucial insight into the political experiences that shaped her theoretical work. In particular, they show Arendt developing a self-contradictory brand of Zionism, which might be called a Zionism of necessity. Faced with the collapse of Jewish assimilation, Arendt turned to Zionism as an "escape route from illusion into reality, from mendacity and self-deception to an honest existence." And the major subject of her wartime writing is the need for Jews to regain their political self-respect—to refuse any longer to be *shlemihls*. As she wrote in 1941, "One truth that is unfamiliar to the Jewish people, though they are beginning to learn it, is that *you can only defend yourself as the person you are attacked as*. A person attacked as a Jew cannot defend himself as an Englishman or Frenchman. The world would only conclude that he is simply not defending himself." That was why Arendt strongly urged the creation of a Jewish army, which would enable the Jews to hold up their heads as equals among the Allied powers.

What Arendt's Zionism lacked, however, was any positive content, any genuine interest in Judaism or Jewish history. This attitude was typical of the assimilated German Jews of her generation, a natural product of an upbringing where, as she recalled, "I did not know from my family that I was Jewish. . . . The word 'Jew' never came up when I was a small child." Arendt's Jewishness was constituted by anti-Semitism: "I first met up with it through anti-Semitic remarks . . . from children on the street. After that I was, so to speak, 'enlightened.' "

It stood to reason, then, that in 1948, when the State of Israel was established and the existential threat to the Jewish people had receded, Arendt rapidly disembarrassed herself of her Zionism. While she retained a lifelong interest in the fate of the Jewish state—"Any real catastrophe in Israel would affect me more deeply than almost anything else," she told Mary McCarthy—she had an equally strong distaste for its politics and for most of its citizens. Among the posthumous revelations that have done the most damage to Arendt's reputation are the letters that she wrote from Jerusalem in 1961, when she was attending the Eichmann trial. Her description of the crowd at the courthouse, in a letter to Jaspers, passes beyond condescension into outright racism: "On top, the judges, the best of German Jewry. Below them, the prosecuting attorneys, Galicians, but still Europeans. Everything is organized by a police force that gives me the creeps, speaks only Hebrew, and looks Arabic. Some downright brutal types among them. They would obey any order. And outside the doors, the oriental mob, as if one were in Istanbul or some other half-Asiatic country."

The venom of this description, like the undisguised pleasure that Arendt took in leaving Israel—"I have never before grasped the *concrete* meaning of 'relief' so clearly," she wrote at the end of a 1955 trip—suggests the great emotional forces at play. As she put down roots in New York City—she lived on the West Side of Manhattan until her death—and became a sought-after writer and lecturer, Arendt's ideas about self-respect, that Rahelian imperative, began to change. Now the solidarity she had once sought in Zionism began to appear not as a source of strength but as another evidence of weakness—a way of clinging to one's people because one was too weak to stand alone.

She described this phenomenon in a 1959 speech in Hamburg, where she had been awarded the Lessing Prize: "It is as if under the pressure of persecution the persecuted have moved so closely together that the interspace which we have called world . . . has simply disappeared. This produces a warmth of human relationships which may strike those who have had some experience with such groups as an almost physical phenomenon." But the price of that warmth was too high to pay: "In extreme cases, in which pariahdom has persisted for centuries, we can speak of real worldlessness. And worldlessness, alas, is always a form of barbarism." For a Jew to tell a German audience, less than fifteen years after the Holocaust, that Jews were barbarians was a shockingly effective means of reclaiming the isolation, the "interspace," that Arendt so urgently needed.

It was this refusal of solidarity, as much as any specific assertion, that led so many Jewish readers to react with fury to "Eichmann in Jerusalem" when it appeared, in five installments in this magazine, in 1963. Arendt's report from the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the chief bureaucrat and organizer of the Jewish genocide, remains one of the touchstones of American thinking about the Holocaust. But the anger that her work provoked among many Jews—according to the historian Peter Novick, she "became, for a time, American Jewish Public Enemy Number One"—has proved just as durable. At the time, Arendt's critics objected to her blanket condemnation of the Jews drafted to serve on the *Judenräte*—the Jewish Councils established by the Nazis to manage the ghettos—and to her apparently trivializing phrase about "the banality of evil."

Reading "Eichmann in Jerusalem" today, however, in the light of all we have since learned from and about Arendt, it is clear that these local issues were only the occasions for resentment, not the whole cause. That cause, once again, can be traced back to the "laboratory of Arendt's political thought," and to her own experience as a Jewish woman in Germany. What raised Arendt's Jewish consciousness was her recognition of Jewish helplessness, both psychological and political. But if she responded to that helplessness with an insistence on self-help, she found it hard to avoid condemning those Jews who, in her view, did not or could not help themselves. Rahel was the first of these, the members of the *Judenräte* the last. "To a Jew this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story," she wrote.

Arendt's need to distance herself from Jews, and especially from Jewish victims, accounts for the ironic tone that has always struck readers of "Eichmann in Jerusalem." Arendt's attitude toward Eichmann himself is simply dismissive: her whole characterization of him as a banal bureaucrat, oblivious of the evil he does, is a way of asserting his human and intellectual inferiority. What inflames Arendt, on the other hand, is any attempt by the Jewish witnesses to draw attention to what they suffered. "I hate, am afraid of pity, always have been," she once told McCarthy, and she mocked anything that appeared to her to be an appeal for pity. "The gist of the background witnesses' testimony about conditions in the Polish ghettos, about procedures in the various death camps, about forced labor, and, generally, the attempt to exterminate through labor, was never in dispute," she wrote irritably; "on the contrary there was hardly anything in what they told that had not been known before." She complained that "the basic mistake" of the trial was that "the Jews want to pour out their sorrow to the world"—though "of course," she granted, "they have suffered more than Eichmann has."

In this and many other places, Arendt's critics saw that the pride she so effortfully cultivated carried shame as its necessary obverse. This shame is what led a critic like Gershom Scholem—whose upbringing was similar to Arendt's but who left Germany for Palestine and took a Hebrew name—to accuse her of lacking "love of the Jewish people." It is a measure of Arendt's toughness, and of her self-knowledge, that she acknowledged the charge, in a deeply revealing letter collected in "The Jewish Writings": "You are quite right—I am not moved by any 'love' of this sort. . . . I have never in my life 'loved' any people or collective. . . . I indeed love 'only' my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons."

The Heidegger correspondence confirms that Arendt lived this principle. In 1950, seventeen years after they had last communicated, Arendt and Heidegger met again, when she went to Germany to help track down stolen Jewish cultural treasures. At times, she had been publicly critical of Heidegger's behavior during his rectorship and afterward, but the renewal of their ties banished all her suspicions. "This evening and this morning are the confirmation of an entire life," she wrote to him after their meeting. For the next two years, their love enjoyed a brief afterlife, as Heidegger wrote poems about her and told her things like "I wish I could run the five-fingered comb through your

"I see you've discovered the heirloom Twinkies."

frizzy hair." Even when the jealousy of Heidegger's wife, Elfriede, brought this quasi-romance to an end, Arendt kept in touch with her old teacher. In the last years of his life, she helped get his work translated in America.

Arendt's unqualified support of Heidegger was important in establishing the convenient myth that his Nazi involvement had been, as she put it, a case of an unworldly man getting carried away by politics, and thus "finally a matter of indifference." Not until the past decade have scholars in Germany and America demolished this notion, by tracing the profound affinities between Heidegger's thought and his reactionary milieu. It is a task that Arendt herself was equipped to perform, but her loyalty to Heidegger, and to the German tradition he represented, made it impossible.

Arendt's experience at the Eichmann trial bolstered the belief that defines her political philosophy: that there must be a rigorous separation between love, which we can experience only privately, and respect, which we earn in and require for our public lives. If it is true that, as Arendt once observed, "in the works of a great writer we can almost always find a consistent metaphor peculiar to him alone in which his whole work seems to come to a focus," then her thought is certainly focussed on the image of distance or separation. A dignified individual existence, she believes, requires distance from others, the "interspace" that she described in the Hamburg speech. Compassion is dangerous, in her view, because "not unlike love," it "abolishes the distance, the in-between which always exists in human intercourse." What preserves that distance, on the other hand, is pride—the pride of equals that she finds exemplified in the political realm, the "public space."

This view of politics may help explain why, in "The Human Condition" and "On Revolution," Arendt exalts it as the highest of human activities. Politics, in her work, is not really an empirical concept—an affair of elections and legislation, still less of tax policy or Social Security reform. Everything having to do with economics, in fact, Arendt prefers to exclude from her definition of politics, relegating it to the nebulous category of "the social." Real politics is found, rather, in the deliberations of the Founders in Philadelphia, or the debates of the Athenians in their assembly. It is an affair of exceptionally talented individuals—people not unlike Hannah Arendt—arguing with one another under conditions of equality and mutual respect.

Still more revealing than Arendt's definition of politics is her explanation of why people are drawn to it in the first place. We do not enter the political world to pursue justice or to create a better world. No, human beings love politics because they love to excel, and a political career is the best way to win the world's respect. In ancient Greece, she writes, "the polis was permeated by a fiercely agonal spirit, where everybody had constantly to distinguish himself from all others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he was the best of all. The public realm, in other words, was reserved for individuality; it was the only place where men could show who they really and inexchangeably were." Arendt recognizes that most of the people of Athens, including all women and slaves, were shut out from this arena, but she accepts that her kind of politics is necessarily an aristocratic pursuit. In yet another instance of her favorite metaphor, she defends "the bitter need of the few to protect themselves against the many, or rather to protect the island of freedom they have come to inhabit against the surrounding sea of necessity."

Nothing could be more characteristic of Arendt than the longing for respect and recognition that shines through these seemingly abstract arguments. All her experiences as a woman and as a Jew, all the hard wisdom she learned from Heidegger and from Rahel, goes into her yearning for the masculine, aristocratic freedom of the Greek polis. (Richard Wolin, one of Arendt's sharpest contemporary critics, has called this yearning "polis envy.") At times, Arendt's love of the public and the political, and her fear of the private and the psychological, becomes almost neurotically intense. As she wrote to McCarthy, "the inner turmoil of the self, its *shapelessness*," must be kept under strict quarantine: "It is no less indecent, unfit to appear, than our digestive apparatus, or else our inner organs, which also are hidden from visibility by the skin."

This rejection of inwardness, so constant in Arendt's work, from "Rahel Varnhagen" on, is the key to what is most valuable in her legacy, and also what is most questionable. No one has argued more forcefully than Arendt that to deprive human beings of their public, political identity is to deprive them of their humanity—and not just metaphorically. In "The Origins of Totalitarianism," she points out that the first step in the Nazis' destruction of the Jews was to make them stateless, in the knowledge that people with no stake in a political community have no claim on the protection of its laws.

This is the insight that makes Arendt a thinker for our time, when failed states have again and again become the settings for mass murder. She reveals with remorseless logic why emotional appeals to "human rights" or "the international community" so often prove impotent in the face of a humanitarian crisis. "The Rights of Man, after all, had been defined as 'inalienable' because they were supposed to be independent of all governments," she writes in "Origins," "but it turned out that the moment human beings lacked their own government and had to fall back upon their minimum rights, no authority was left to protect them and no institution was willing to guarantee them." This is exactly what happened in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and what is happening now in Darfur. Genocide is a political problem, Arendt insists, and it can be solved only politically.

Yet the supreme value that Arendt places on individual pride and aristocratic distance, on intellect and excellence, also sharply restricts the human understanding that must be the basis for any confrontation with political evil, especially the evil of the Holocaust. Too much of life and too many kinds of people are excluded from Arendt's sympathy, which she could freely give only to those as strong as she was. If, as she wrote, "it is the desire to excel which makes men love the world," then our love for the world actually makes it harder for us to love the people who inhabit it. This is the dilemma that runs through all Arendt's writing, demonstrating that what she observed about Marx is true of her as well: "Such fundamental and flagrant contradictions rarely occur in second-rate writers; in the work of the great authors they lead into the very center of their work." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Girl Meets Boy, *by Ali Smith (Canongate; $14).* In Ovid's Metamorphoses, Iphis is brought up as a boy and, on the eve of her wedding to another girl, saved from disaster when an obliging goddess agrees to change her gender. Such obvious transformation is absent from Smith's modern retelling, which is narrated in alternating chapters by Midge and Anthea Gunn, two sisters living together in a small Scottish town. Midge is an uptight executive at a bottled-water company; Anthea is her flighty younger sibling, who, to Midge's consternation, falls in love with an androgynous, kilt-clad graffitist. The plot primarily concerns the sisters' changing perceptions (Midge slowly realizes that her company is corrupt; Anthea is emboldened by first love), which Smith conveys in vibrant interior monologues. Although the correlation of staid gender roles, corporate greed, and consumer culture at times feels overwrought, Smith's sublime prose more than compensates.

Tinkers, *by Paul Harding (Bellevue Literary Press; $14.95).* This compact, adamantine début dips in and out of the consciousness of a New England patriarch named George Washington Crosby as he lies dying on a hospital bed in his living room, "right where they put the dining room table, fitted with its two extra leaves for holiday dinners." The story traces Crosby's life back to his hardscrabble Maine childhood, where his father was a tinker and travelling salesman who suffered from epileptic seizures. Crosby's emotional life is dominated by his father's abandonment of the family on learning that his wife was planning to have him institutionalized, but the most memorable parts of Harding's novel may be his depiction of a nineteenth-century landscape complete with mule-drawn carts and "frozen wood so brittle that it rang when you split it." In Harding's skillful evocation, Crosby's life, seen from its final moments, becomes a mosaic of memories, "showing him a different self every time he tried to make an assessment."

Reading Dance, *edited by Robert Gottlieb (Pantheon; $45).* This sweeping anthology of dance writing weighs in at more than thirteen hundred pages. In his introduction, Gottlieb, the editor of myriad books on dance and the former editor of this magazine, acknowledges that no anthology is ideal. This one has a strong tilt toward ballet (and further toward Balanchine), an emphasis on the canonical past over the present, and no index. Within those limits, however, lies a marvellous compendium. Authors and essays both famous and forgotten, memoirs and interviews, panegyrics, eviscerations, the topical and the retrospective all speak to one another in ways that illuminate the essential personalities and debates that shaped the art, as well as the possibilities for tracking such an ephemeral subject in prose.

Paracelsus, *by Charles Webster (Yale; $40).* In the first major consideration in fifty years of the Renaissance doctor, alchemist, and theologian, Webster draws on nonscientific writings by Paracelsus that have been made widely available only in the past few decades. Born in Sweden in 1493, a quarter century before the German Reformation, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim orbited a wealthy and powerful class of physicians, but his unorthodox views made him a virtual "vagrant" among his peers. He broke from the millennia-old theory of the humors, developing new medical theories based upon a mystical vision of man as a microcosm of the universe, and an alchemically informed notion of the intrinsic properties of certain metals. Webster paints Paracelsus as a "religious and social controversialist," and argues that the diverse strands of his thought were unified by his belief that the end of time was near, when, he imagined, the demise of physical suffering would obviate the need for medical intervention.

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REFLECTION

by Bob Staake
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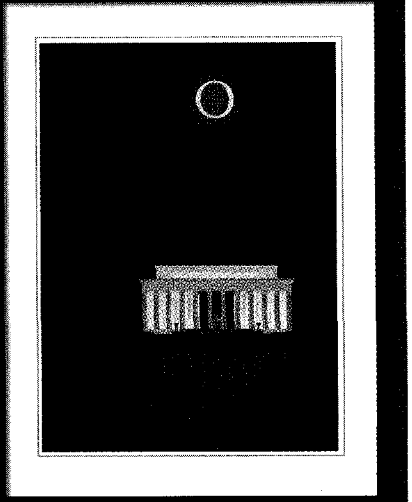

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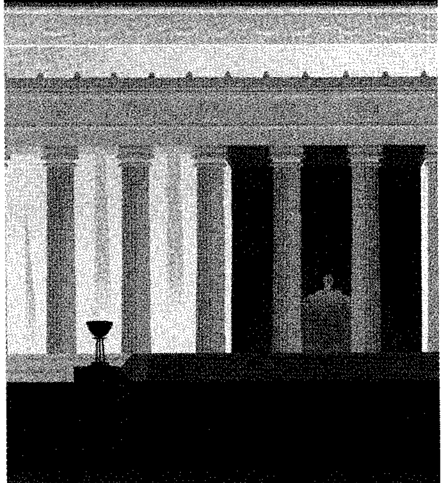

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POP MUSIC

INTO THE WOODS

The Bon Iver sound.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Justin Vernon, a twenty-seven-year-old native of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, is six feet three, big but not heavy, bearded, and often seen in boots and a thick plaid shirt. In February, he became one of the most discussed musicians of 2008 when the independent label Jagjaguwar rereleased "For Emma, Forever Ago," a record he had made himself the previous year, over three months, while living in a hunting cabin that his father built. Until I met Vernon, the story sounded like a commonplace; people hole up to make records all the time. But listening to Vernon talk—which he did deliberately and evenly, with an aversion to jokes and small talk which complicates the plausible idea that he is just as regular as folks get—makes it plain how important Eau Claire is to his work. The word "home" pops up often in conversation. "For Emma, Forever Ago," which appears on many print and Web best-of lists for 2008 (it's at the top of mine), happened because of Eau Claire.

Vernon's story is one of escape and renewal, a road movie that doesn't spend very long on the road. Three years ago, he was living in Raleigh, North Carolina, playing with friends from Eau Claire in a band called DeYarmond Edison, and dating a woman who is not called Emma. (Emma is a proxy name for a woman he dated years earlier in Eau Claire.) DeYarmond Edison made slow, stately music that was rooted in American acoustic sound, and was vaguely related to old blues and to recent American indie rock. Vernon sang in a style close to his speaking voice, low and unaffected, obviously American, though not clearly Midwestern. In March of 2006, Vernon recorded an EP under his own name and called it "Hazelton." He sang two songs almost entirely in falsetto, multitracking his voice until he became his own chorus. This style is distinct from his resting voice in every way—it is unlikely that you would tie the two voices to the same person.

Four months later, Vernon experienced a hat trick of bad times: DeYarmond Edison broke up, Vernon split with his girlfriend, and he contracted mononucleosis, which affected his liver. He subsequently spent a lot of time indoors, watching the TV series "Northern Exposure" on DVD. One episode featured the cast greeting a new snowfall in Alaska with the phrase "*Bon hiver*," French for "Good winter." Vernon liked the snow, which reminded him of home, and the phrase, which he first transcribed as "boniverre." (He later removed the "h" from *hiver* because the French word reminded him of "liver.")

"Flume," which is now the first track on "For Emma," was the song that, in November of 2006, brought Vernon home to Eau Claire. There he surrendered to a new voice, and began writing with, and for, the falsetto. Sometimes I am surprised by the fragmentary lyrics on "For Emma"; more often, I am moved by the beauty of Vernon's massed voice, and held in place by the force of each careful, dogged song. You don't need to know about breakups or solitary stretches in the woods to feel a line dragging these songs forward. As pretty as Vernon's musical tendencies may be, the line pulling "For Emma" along is not light and could not have been easily found.

"Flume" works around a shuffling acoustic-guitar chord sequence that could show up in almost any genre of American music. That sequence plays once, and then the game changes, when Vernon's falsetto choir enters, bringing a church with it. The stack of voices is overwhelming—a combination of the secular and the religious in one cloudy mass—and is as exalted as any sound in American popular music today. The opening lyrics of "Flume" are both a declaration and a vague confession: "I am my mother's only one, it's enough. I wear my garment so it shows—now you know." It is easy to believe that his lyrics are "sounds that eventually turned into words," as Vernon once told an interviewer. In "Flume," the language works best as sound—I listened to the album a dozen times before I looked up the words. Among other things, the chorus contains the sequence "only love is all maroon, lapping lakes like leery loons, leaving rope burns—reddish ruse." Starting the album with some word salad turns out to work just fine, as it gives you time to adjust to the power of the singing.

Vernon is intermittently specific. "Skinny Love" begins with a shuffle not so different from the one on "Flume," and it doesn't ascend to Heaven so quickly. The choir is contained this time, maybe only a few voices: "Come on skinny love, just last the year. Pour a little salt, we were never here." Then Vernon's natural voice resurfaces, to repeat "my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my," an invocation that skirts both blues and gospel, before the falsetto finishes the stanza with "staring at the sink of blood and crushed veneer." (That's a cue that this number may be leaving the church.) The song stays fairly small, less adorned than the songs before it, and pauses before Vernon opens up in his natural voice, bound to the earth but revving hard: "And I told you to be patient, and I told you to be fine. And I told you to be balanced, and I told you to be kind. And in the morning I'll be with you, but it will be a different 'kind.' I'll be holding all the tickets and you'll be owning all the fines." Vernon spits out each "told" louder than the words before it—it does not appear that skinny love is something to hold on to.

I first saw Vernon perform with Bon Iver last July, at the Bowery Ballroom. What seemed transcendent on the record became concrete live. Vernon sat onstage, surrounded by guitars, amplifiers, foot pedals, and a keyboard that, with the stage-left wall, formed a square around him. The rest of his band stayed upstage: on guitar, the improbably young Mike Noyce (a former guitar student of Vernon's who had left college to join the touring version of Bon Iver); Sean Carey on drums; and Mark Paulson, from the opening band, Bowerbirds, on percussion.

In the dark space of Bowery Ballroom—a room that is not small—it felt like several hundred of us were sitting in Vernon's head. The intimacy of his songs was matched by a focussed performance that collapsed the space around us. And then, after the demanding and cathartic "Skinny Love," Vernon retuned his guitar and chatted us up, saying, "How are you guys?," as if he'd pulled up in his truck to help us move a few pieces of furniture. That personality—"a pretty present person" is how he put it to me—only makes it easier to open up to the music.

The songs from "For Emma," which Vernon once described as merely "demos" to his friends, feel complete, now that he has had more than a year to play them live. Bon Iver songs rarely feature a full drum kit or a bass line; Vernon concentrates on the human voice, and usually provides just enough information to guide that voice. But Vernon's additions onstage—a glowing and receding guitar line, a brief, thunderous unison of tomtom drums—anchor and frame the songs. Vernon seems to know when to cut through the angelic foofaraw and let the band bring the songs closer to rock, though that connection fades in and out.

At Town Hall, this December, Vernon had a different series of connections to make. The hall is an august space, with a proscenium stage and theatre seating. It is not an easy room to overwhelm, and for the first part of the Bon Iver show there was a slightly middle-school-recital feel to the whole thing. Vernon and his band were spread out across the wide stage, and the emotional exchange in the room was limited. "Skinny Love" upset the decorum a little, but it wasn't until the end of the set that Vernon found the opportunity to create the almost uncomfortable closeness that Bon Iver songs demand.

As Vernon began to tell the crowd that he doesn't much like encores, and that the band was almost out of songs, an audience member started shouting back at him. (Town Hall is the last room in New York where you would expect anyone to shout.) The man's complaints were about the economy, layoffs, and New York's general malaise, and they were soon drowned out by a round of applause and laughter. Vernon responded, "I didn't hear everything you said at the end there, but it seemed really heartfelt." With this weird and upbeat moment in the air, he invited the crowd—as he does at every show—to sing along to the song that I find it hardest to get through unscathed, "The Wolves (Act I and II)." The audience was asked to sing five words—"what might have been lost"—which signal the song's shift from a series of chords that ring without any clear time signature to a steady 3/4 stomp that uses those five words as a main motif. The recorded version doesn't approach the ruckus that Bon Iver made that evening; as we all sang along, the band pounded harder and harder, blending in little eddies of feedback and clatter. Those words are what get me—joined with melody, they seem like a summary of the entire album, especially with that highly conditional "might." Trying to keep track of everything lost? Or celebrating what wasn't? When the band was done, and the crowd had filed out, I was still in my seat. ♦

Exalted: Justin Vernon's falsetto choir of massed voices. Photograph by Ethan Levitas.

NEWYORKER.COM

Video: Justin Vernon with Sasha Frere-Jones.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

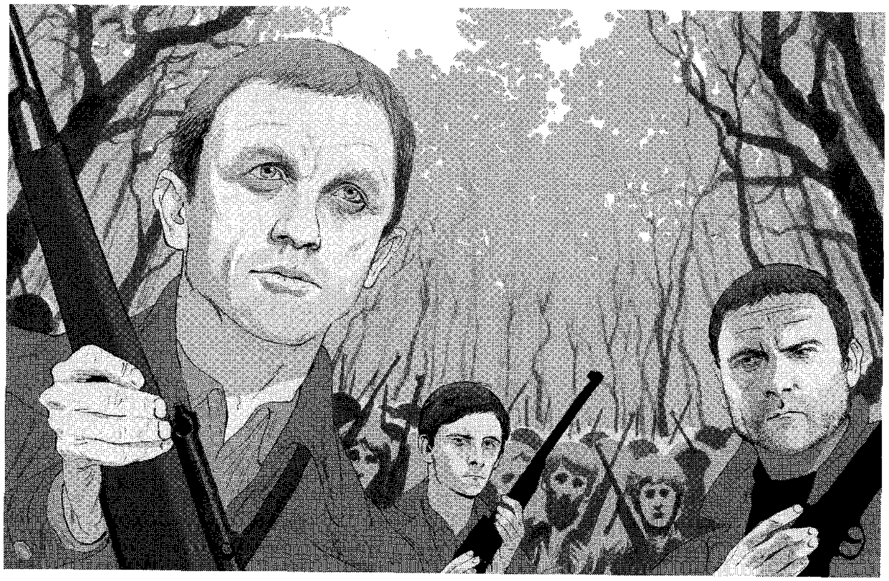
SURVIVORS

"Defiance" and "The Secret of the Grain."

BY DAVID DENBY

In Edward Zwick's "Defiance," the beautiful light—a little dryer than life—has obviously been digitally altered. Yet apart from this minor shading there's not much in the film that could not have been done forty years ago. Zwick's film, a true Holocaust story that most people do not know, suggests some startling new ideas about resistance, sex, and class in the doomed provinces of Jewish Eastern Europe. But the moviemaking is resolutely old-fashioned—as square as an Arthur Miller play or an evening of Tchaikovsky. Does it matter? In this case, it does not. Zwick's conservative, humanist-sentimental style still has life in its aging limbs. "Defiance," as it turns out, makes insistent emotional demands, and those who respond to it at all, as I did, are likely to go all the way and even come out of it feeling slightly stunned.

Zwick based the movie on Nechama Tec's excellent 1993 book, of the same title, which chronicles, in great detail, an anomalous corner of history. In the late autumn of 1941, in Nazi-occupied Belarus, where Jews were being executed by the thousands, four brothers from a large Jewish farming family named Bielski, along with a few others who were determined to survive, went into hiding in the forest. Gradually, more ragged, hungry, and dazed people from the ghettos began to show up in the woods. In 1942, Tuvia Bielski, the oldest brother and the leader of what became known as the Bielski Otriad (Detachment), made two extraordinary decisions. First, he sensed that the best way to resist the Nazis was not to form a corps of, say, fifty young killers with machine guns but to take into the group every Jew who wanted to join, including the *malbushim*, the useless ones—the children, the elderly, the sick, the unskilled, the physically incompetent intellectuals—and to fight on so many fronts that survival itself became a weapon. Second, he realized that the group wouldn't last unless it actively collaborated with the ragtag remnants of the overwhelmed Red Army that were forming units to harass the Germans. Some in the Bielski group, joining the Soviets, became partisan fighters; some repaired clothing and weapons for the soldiers; the rest miraculously improvised a civil society, complete with a hospital, a bathhouse, and a tannery, even though they were often on the move. Eventually, some twelve hundred people gathered in the forest, and, by 1944, when the Soviets swept westward and liberated the area, only fifty or so had died. It was by far the largest and most successful Jewish armed rescue of Jews during the war.



Daniel Craig and Liev Schreiber in Edward Zwick's film of a true Holocaust story.

FRANK STOCKTON

At the beginning of the movie, some standard, blurry black-and-white documentary footage of German troops killing unarmed people glides smoothly into the staged action, filmed in sharp-focus full color, which is Zwick's way, I think, of telling us that the dramatization and the fictional invention are about to begin, but that they will remain close to the facts. The movie was shot (by the cinematographer Eduardo Serra) in forests near the ones inhabited by the Bielski group, and, despite the digital shading, I don't know when I've seen so much raw fresh air, so much rain, snow, and damp, so tactile a rendering of trees and earth. The movie is a kind of realistic fairy tale set in a forest newly enchanted by the sanctified work of staying alive. Zwick grounds the story in the labor and in the physical discomfort and irritability of townspeople living out of their element in ratty clothes, their skin withered and discolored from malnutrition. Everything is on a human scale, including the partisan battles. Those in the audience who remain eager, even after "Munich," to see Jews tear apart their enemies will not be disappointed. But the clashes with German troops, though excitingly staged, are presented not as an occasion for glory but as either a grim necessity of survival or an open expression of revenge.

"Defiance" is a Hollywood product, with decades of storytelling know-how behind it, and Zwick and the film's screenwriter, Clayton Frohman, have compressed and transposed events, defined and sharpened tensions, and, in general, shaped the material for emotional effectiveness and suspense. As the community grows, the dramatic center of the movie shifts to a Biblical struggle between two of the Bielski brothers: the touchy and aggressive Zus (Liev Schreiber) resents Tuvia (Daniel Craig), who takes control and suppresses any challenge to his authority. Zus wants to kill Germans, and Tuvia, milder (though hardly mild—he kills when he has to), wants to save Jews. After nearly destroying each other in a vicious fight, the two split up, and Zus joins the Soviets, while Tuvia becomes a kind of forest-world Old Testament king. You may think, Not another warring-brothers cliché, but there's real emotional power in those Biblical stories, and this secular version is tersely written and incisively played. Daniel Craig, it turns out, can embody a Moses figure without losing his sex appeal, which may be the highest compliment I've ever paid an actor. Craig's powerful, compact body, the flattened vertical planes of his face, the baleful stare, the arrogant trim to his lips—this working-class Brit is more than convincing as a Jewish partisan leader, and his dry, shiv-like voice allows him to get away with thematic moral statements like "We have all chosen this—to live here free like human beings for as long as we can." The strong-looking Schreiber matches him. His Zus is surly, a bit of a thug but, in this context, a hero, and highly attractive. In fleeting moments, the filmmakers develop one of Tec's most fascinating observations: that, in the forest, the Jewish social and sexual hierarchies were turned upside down. The farmers or working-class men who could shoot, gut an animal, and build a shelter were sought out as protectors by the women, including the educated, upper-middle-class women; the formerly desirable scholars of Hegel, Marx, and the Talmud were not.

"Defiance" is not without melodramatic flourishes, and, now and then, the movie seems mightily impressed with its own nobility. There's one rousing speech too many, and I could have done with less of James Newton Howard's music, which pounds away at us when the action starts up and turns cloyingly plaintive at times of mourning (Joshua Bell plays a lachrymose violin theme). There are bits of overly theatrical staging, as when everyone in the group talks at once and Craig silences them with a shout, and they turn to him in awe. But Zwick pulls off many of the high-tension scenes deftly and easily—such as the detachment's murder of Nazi collaborators, or its treacherously unstable relations with the Red Army partisans, who occasionally knock Jews around when they are drunk or just bored. Zwick has made an obvious swipe from "The Godfather": a climactic moment in which a joyful, Chagallesque wedding in the forest is intercut with a bloody attack on the Germans recalls the baptism of Michael Corleone's child, which is intercut with the slaughter of Michael's Mob rivals. But the meaning of the juxtapositions is quite different. The first is sardonic—Corleone is a hypocrite. This one is resolutely existential: if Jews want to marry and produce another generation they must learn to kill, a lesson that's bound to elicit a mixed response, especially now. One Jewish friend characterized the movie as "Fiddler on the Roof" meets "The Dirty Dozen." But "Defiance" is shrewder than that. The picture offers the most moving account we've ever had of how an ordinary, rather disagreeable man, challenged and then electrified by catastrophe, grows into a great leader—in this case, a man possessed of an uncanny sense of timing, authority, and force. After the war, Tuvia Bielski spent a quiet decade in Israel, then moved to Brooklyn, where he and Zus ran taxi and trucking companies. He was largely uncelebrated in either place—perhaps because some Jews took his success in saving people as a rebuke to their own helplessness. After Tuvia died, in 1987, Nechama Tec rescued him from obscurity, and Edward Zwick and Daniel Craig have now sealed the case for his immortality.

The award-winning French movie "The Secret of the Grain" is another example of big-hearted humanist filmmaking, but the director, Abdellatif Kechiche, works not with Zwick's carefully staged groupings and closeups but with a handheld camera devouring a tumultuous overflow of life. In the port of Sète, on the Mediterranean coast (near Montpellier), in a heated atmosphere of rivalry and sexual jealousy, a large family of Tunisian immigrants and their French-born children gather together to eat and to quarrel. The patriarch (Habib Boufares), a laid-off dockworker, desperately wants to leave something to the next generation, so he opens a couscous restaurant on an old ship. Boufares, a handsome square-shouldered man who is not a professional actor, ducks away from the camera. As a protagonist, he's a little distant, but Kechiche digs a good story out of the flux, and, in the movie's final forty minutes, the suspense is terrific. Will everything be ready in time to impress the local French nabobs assembled for the opening? A feat of heroic dancing (by the beautiful Hafsia Herzi) not only saves the occasion but may permanently alter the erotic tastes of Westerners who have made a fetish of the flat, lean belly. ♦

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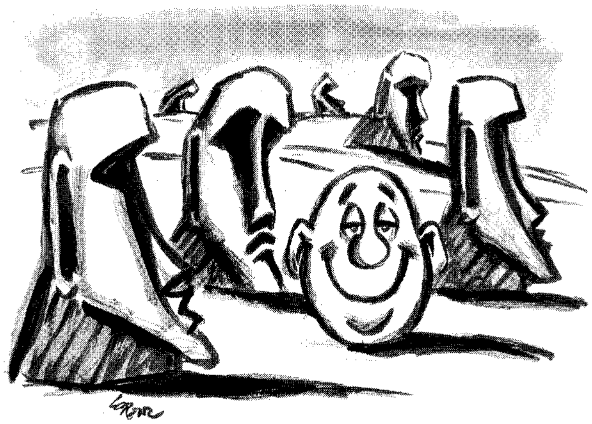
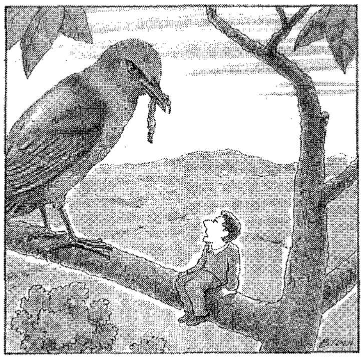
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Mick Stevens, must be received by Sunday, January 11th. Finalists in the December 22nd & 29th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the January 26th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Guess who's getting voted off the island."
Michael Vorenberg, Barrington, R.I.



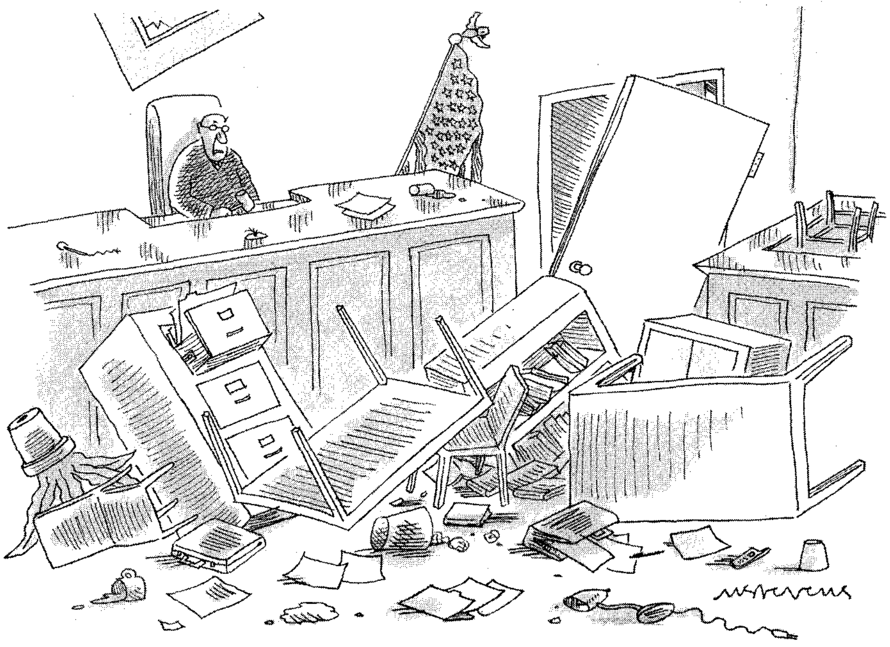
THE FINALISTS

"I want to live at my dad's."
Sean Delaney, Stanardsville, Va.

"No, thanks—I only eat them on reality shows."
Sean Lee, Brooklyn, N.Y.

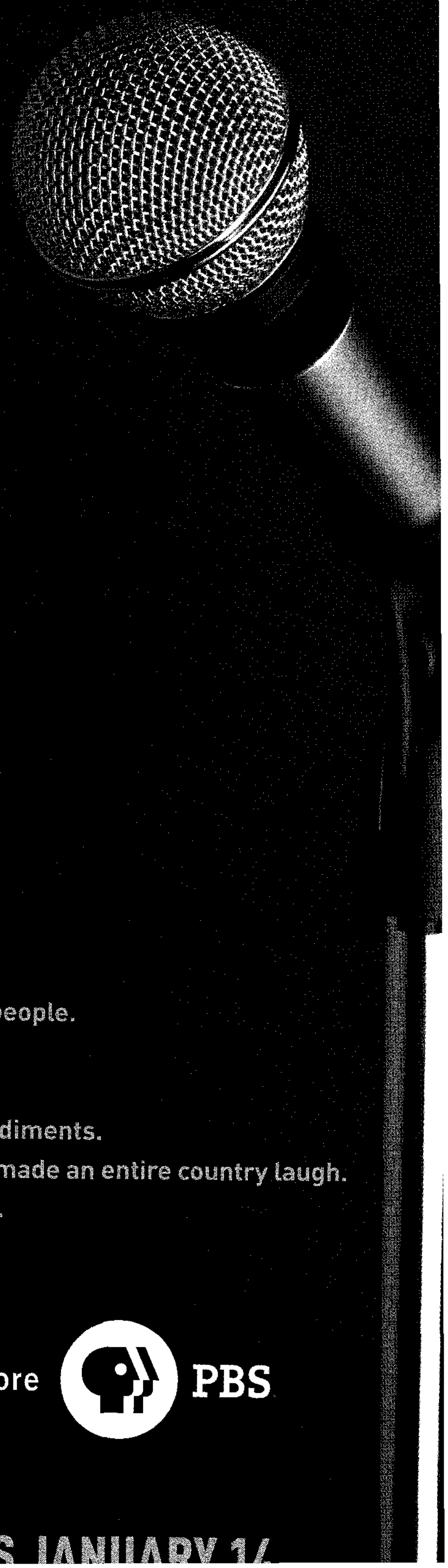
"Am I in your dream or are you in mine?"
Joe Sherlock, Omaha, Neb.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



" "

Thank you Paris.
Thank you Britney.
Thank you Lindsay.
Thank you Jacko.
Thank you fat people.
Thank you skinny people.
Thank you short people.
Thank you tall people.
Thank you uptight women.
Thank you shallow men.
Thank you bald guys.
Thank you bad drivers.
Thank you proctologists.
Thank you mimes.
Thank you pro wrestling.
Thank you people with mullets.
Thank you boy bands.
Thank you spandex.
Thank you right-wing conservatives.
Thank you left-wing radicals.
Thank you beauty pageant contestants.
Thank you bad actors from the 70s.
Thank you overzealous gym teachers.
Thank you motivational speakers.
Thank you tree huggers.
Thank you France.
hank you cross-dressers.
hank you nerds, geeks, and other socially inept people.
hank you guys with big biceps and small brains.
hank you women with big...hair.
hank you famous people with slight speech impediments.
hank you everyone who ever inspired a joke that made an entire country laugh.
Vithout you, we wouldn't be able to bring you this.



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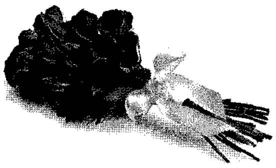
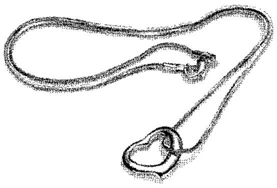


I really like you.



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